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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

Monday, July 27

Israel holds the ground on every front and none of the rooms where the wars are being settled, from a six-man committee in Tehran to the UN.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE A bagel chain shot up before dawn draws a mayor's condemnation, a hate-crime unit, and a gang task force by mid-morning — the front end Western police keep getting faster at, and still one rung short of an arrest and two short of a sentence. CIJA reads the mix correctly: anti-Zionist street rhetoric, local criminal muscle, Iranian-backed proxies, and ISIS-inspired copycats now draw from one well. The French cache Sa'ar's visitors came to describe and the Toronto gunfire that interrupted the meeting run on the same current. A community that has learned to read these mornings knows the difference between being condemned and being guarded, and a task force with no suspect is the condemnation.

CLASSIFICATION

Reader Edition

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THE American bombing of Iran has not resumed for a third night. Israel spent the quiet at highest alert with nothing to shoot. On the ground it is still winning every exchange — seventy percent of Gaza behind the berm, the IRGC decapitated, twenty-six battalions holding Judea and Samaria. Tehran is spending the reprieve on concrete, and it is not the only actor using the quiet to move the fight somewhere Israel cannot reach.

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FLASH BRIEF

- **Iran:** American strikes stay halted a third night as Tehran rebuilds and Trump denies the interceptor shortage behind the pause. *See The War Today.*
- **Judea and Samaria:** Central Command surges twenty-six battalions against a terror wave officers call a snowball rolling downhill. *See The War Today.*
- **Gaza:** The international stabilization force enters Rafah while Hamas keeps every rifle and tunnel it had. *See The War Today.*
- **Election integrity:** The elections committee orders Smotrich's AI video of Eisenkot shaking hands with Abbas deleted from every account. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Settler-terror charge:** Six hundred former security chiefs press Trump to force Israel to halt "settler terrorism," timed to the Netanyahu meeting. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Internal fracture:** An INSS survey finds Israelis rank civil conflict at home level with a nuclear Iran. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Syria:** Sharaa courts an Israeli security deal while refusing to drop Damascus's claim to the Golan Heights. *See Israel and the World.*
- **The ICC:** Karim Khan's ouster leaves the Netanyahu warrants standing as Washington moves against the court itself. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Canada:** Gunmen shoot up two Jewish bakeries in Toronto; police open a task force and name no suspect. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Britain:** Britain's new solicitor general faces scrutiny over 2010 photos meeting Hamas officials in Gaza. *See Briefly Noted.*
- **Lebanon:** Disarmament stalls on who verifies it as Washington itself presses Israel to widen the war north. *See Developments to Watch.*

The same handoff runs through theaters that otherwise share nothing. Washington dropped disarmament from the Gaza deal, so the stabilization force enters Rafah while the Nukhba rebuilds. It delisted a former al-Qaeda commander in Damascus, and Israel is now offered a negotiation over the Golan by a man who will not call it Israeli. On the legitimacy front the direction reverses but the mechanism holds: Israel's own retired spy chiefs carry the "settler terror" charge to Trump, and Ramallah carries it to the UN. The ground holds. The verdict on all of it is being drafted where Jerusalem has no seat.

The War Today

Trump Denies the Interceptor Math Behind His Own Halt as Iran Rebuilds

American strikes on Iran have not resumed for a third night, and the reason has become a fight Washington is having with itself. Trump told the Wall Street Journal the United States holds "far more munitions than anyone in the world, and far more than we need." That denies the dwindling-interceptor account his own officials gave for the halt: the Joint Chiefs chairman had reportedly warned of a Patriot and THAAD shortage, and CENTCOM's Brad Cooper judged the Hormuz target set near exhaustion short of a wider war.

Trump then posted two AI-generated images to Truth Social, one of himself waving a flag over a seized tanker, one of a mass strike on Kharg Island, and threatened to hit the oil terminal for real. Tehran answered that it will hold its fire as long as Washington does, left a deal on the table, and told Trump to “go back to the air conditioner.” Under the messaging the reprieve is already setting: Pezeshkian ordered immediate reconstruction of the bridges and missile bases the strikes hit, Oman’s mediators left Tehran calling the Hormuz-consortium talks “productive,” and statements attributed to Mojtaba Khamenei — whose own hold on the succession is the open question — called for continued jihad against Israel and named the defense of Hezbollah the regime’s “strategic mandate.” Israel stayed at its highest alert and fired nothing. Netanyahu flies to Washington having told Fox the war ends only when the regime “falls” or is weakened into giving up its nuclear program.

ASSESSMENT

Whatever actually stopped the bombing — interceptor stocks, exhausted targets, or a president who wanted the exit and now denies the door — the pause hands Iran back the one asset thirteen nights were taking from it. It is time, and Tehran is pouring it into concrete before the analysts finish arguing about why the strikes stopped. The AI images are the maximalism a halt cannot deliver [a Navy that has to render Kharg in a graphics generator is not sailing to take it], and a successor issuing jihad edicts whose own grip is unproven is a regime performing a command it may not hold. The centrifuges under Pickaxe Mountain never came into range of any of it, so the nuclear file the whole campaign opened to close reopens the hour the fire stops, with Israel, the party most exposed, still waiting on a phone call from the man posting the pictures.

Central Command Surges Judea and Samaria as the Terror Wave Snowballs

The counter-terror operation across Judea and Samaria widened over the weekend to twenty-six battalions, after Friday’s shooting near Havat Gilad killed two Israelis and a week of attacks turned lethal. Central Command swept hundreds of locations, arrested more than 130 wanted men — arms dealers, Hamas operatives, incitement figures, and cells the army says were planning imminent attacks — and interrogated hundreds more. Netanyahu and Katz vowed expanded operations against what they called terrorist strongholds, and the cabinet met underground for unstated security reasons. Maj. Yuval Ezra ז”ל was buried at Beit Dagan. Senior officers called the sector “highly volatile and extremely dangerous,” and one described “a snowball rolling downhill” that “will be difficult to stop,” warning the next stage could be a broad popular uprising even as the manpower to contain one is already committed to Gaza, Lebanon, and the Iran alert.

ASSESSMENT

The state answers terror with the one instrument that has actually worked — mass arrests, home demolitions, and a counter-terror tempo Katz credits with cutting attacks by better than eighty percent — and it kept a lethal week from running far worse. The warning underneath is arithmetic, not politics. Twenty-six battalions committed here are twenty-six battalions not holding Gaza, Lebanon, or the Iran line, and the officers running the surge are the same ones telling reporters the next stage is a general uprising. You can win every raid in the sector and still not be standing where the next cell decides to open the second Gaza.

The Stabilization Force Enters Gaza Before the Weapons Come Off

The security cabinet gave initial approval Sunday for the Board of Peace and its international stabilization force to enter Gaza, beginning with a pilot in Rafah — roughly 200 troops to restore basic services, move aid, and build shelters in non-Hamas zones under a Palestinian technocratic committee, entering only on the sign-off of Netanyahu and the defense and foreign ministers. Ben-Gvir was the lone minister against, noting that Hamas has neither demilitarized nor disarmed. The vote lands as Southern Command holds close to seventy percent of the Strip behind the Yellow Line berm, and as the targeting cell keeps working the other clause the truce never contained: the air force killed Hamam Eid, who ran Hamas's drone production in the central camps, and a strike in Deir al-Balah eliminated the Hamas commander who hunted the Strip for suspected Israeli collaborators.

ASSESSMENT

Ben-Gvir's objection is the whole design stated as a complaint. The force built to secure a disarmed Gaza is moving onto the ground while Hamas keeps every rifle, tunnel, and drone shop it had, because Washington quietly stopped making the weapons a condition of the reconstruction. The force meant to hold what it secures does not exist yet: Washington has canvassed some seventy countries for a target already cut to ten thousand, and not one pledge, Indonesia's eight thousand included, has become a soldier on the ground. Rafah gets shelters and a technocratic committee. The Nukhba's replacements keep rebuilding, and the targeting cell answers the disarmament clause the truce never wrote the only way it ever will — one drone-maker and one enforcer at a time, west of a berm that has stopped being a negotiating line and started being a border. Whatever the Board of Peace paints over it, seventy percent of the Strip under Southern Command is the actual government of Gaza this morning.

✘ Field Dossier: *The Gaza Reconstruction Trap* — The force enters Rafah while Hamas keeps its arsenal and Washington drops disarmament as a condition — the mechanism this Dossier lays out, reconstruction underwriting the next rearmament, arriving as a single cabinet vote.

Inside Israel

Sohlberg Orders Smotrich's AI Video Down as Religious Zionism Locks Its Slate

Noam Sohlberg, chairing the Central Elections Committee, ordered Smotrich and Religious Zionism to delete from every account an AI video posted to Smotrich's Facebook that shows Gadi Eisenkot shaking hands with Mahmoud Abbas and then Mansour Abbas, over a caption that Bennett would sit in an Eisenkot government building a Palestinian state. Sohlberg ruled the clip depicts an event that never happened and manufactures a political tie that does not exist, breaching the Elections Law's bar on unfair interference, and that the AI label buried in Facebook's display does not cure the deception. Eisenkot's Yashar! and the Bocharim b'Yisrael watchdog brought the petitions, and the order landed the day the requirement to mark AI campaign material took effect. Hours earlier Religious Zionism locked its slate in a central-committee vote that never reached the full membership: Strock first behind Smotrich, then Rothman, Sukkot, Ohad Tal and Yesha Council head Omer Rahamim, with Woldiger dropped to seventh and a reserved seat held for Tzvika Mor, father of freed hostage Eitan Mor. Smotrich cast the race as "the right against the left."

ASSESSMENT

Israel's campaign opens with a senior coalition party caught manufacturing a handshake that never happened, and the cycle's first integrity ruling went to telling a sitting minister that an AI forgery of his opponent is not propaganda the law will carry. Sohlberg is one of the few on the bench we do not read as a guild instrument, which is why his line holds where a more contested justice's would have made the ruling the story instead of the video [picking a fight with the referee only works if the referee becomes the news]. The slate underneath is the same closed shop — incumbents seated by a central committee, the members never asked.

Six Hundred Ex-Officials Take the "Settler Terror" Charge to Trump

Nearly 600 former IDF, Mossad, Shin Bet and Foreign Ministry officials under Commanders for Israel's Security — the group chaired by Maj. Gen. (res.) Matan Vilnai, with former Mossad chief Danny Yatom and former Shin Bet chief Ami Ayalon among the signatories — sent the White House a letter on the eve of the Netanyahu meeting, copied to Kushner and Witkoff, pressing Trump to force Israel to halt "acts of terrorism by Jewish settlers" in Judea and Samaria. They warned the violence could bring consequences "even more catastrophic than the Hamas atrocities of October 7," wrote that "terror is terror is terror," and charged that "certain members of our current government orchestrate a significant part of this chaos." The letter tied it to Trump's 20-point Gaza plan and Abraham Accords expansion. The ground under it: after the lethal shooting near Tell, a wave of arson and vandalism, including two torched mosques south of Nablus and Tulkarm, drew police arrests, while Netanyahu and Katz answered the attack with accelerated outpost legalization and new communities. Nablus governor Ghassan Douglas claimed Netanyahu avoids confronting "violent settlers" to keep their votes into October.

ASSESSMENT

The arson is real and the police are already arresting for it. That is the fact the letter needs buried, because a category the state prosecutes cannot carry “even more catastrophic than October 7,” and 600 former officers know the ratio they are drowning — near a hundred verified Israeli-civilian incidents a year against thousands of Palestinian attacks. Commanders for Israel’s Security has spent a decade turning that arithmetic into language a foreign capital can legislate, and this letter, timed to the eve of the Netanyahu meeting and copied to the men around Trump, is ammunition handed to the room where Israel holds no seat.

The Public Ranks Civil Conflict Level With a Nuclear Iran

A new INSS survey presented at the ynet-Yedioth Ahronoth national security conference found 39 percent of Israelis naming violent conflict between groups inside society as a top-three threat to the country over the next five years — the same share that named Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon, the two tied at the top of the list. Internal conflict led outright in February at 42 percent against a nuclear Iran’s 40. A large-scale missile attack on the home front ranked third at 35 percent, down from 38. The erosion of Israel’s democratic character came next at 31, down from 34, and the loss of U.S. support held at 22, near the bottom. The map was built from a poll of some 150 experts and interviews with public leaders, then tested on the general public.

ASSESSMENT

Israelis have watched their army decapitate the IRGC and knock Iranian missiles out of the sky, and across two surveys they still rank the danger of turning on each other level with a nuclear Iran. Milchemet achim is the threat no operation reaches — the fracture the coalition builds at home, and the one this edition fills with a draft fight and a war on the attorney general. [The public is reading the same news we are.]

Israel and the World**Sharaa Courts an Israeli Security Deal While Keeping the Golan Claim**

Ahmed al-Sharaa said Syria is working toward a security agreement with Israel that could open a path to what he called “peace.” In the same breath he insisted Damascus will not surrender its claim to the Golan Heights. The overture lands as Washington moves Syria off its state-sponsors-of-terrorism list and Guterres presses for the immediate removal of every remaining sanction on Damascus. Sharaa commanded al-Qaeda’s Nusra Front until 2016. His defense ministry’s forces are the ones UN monitors documented killing Druze in Sweida.

ASSESSMENT

A security deal that leaves the Golan claim standing offers Israel a negotiation over its own land, from a man who ran al-Qaeda's Syrian franchise until 2016. Washington did the real work here: the sanctions relief and the delisting turn a former Nusra commander into a counterparty at all, and the redrawing of Israel's northern border runs, again, through a room Jerusalem is not in. Jerusalem keeps the Golan by law and by the fact of holding it, and a "peace" whose author will not call the territory Israeli buys him a credential and buys Israel nothing [respectability being the one thing Damascus is actually shopping for].

Khan's Removal Leaves the Warrants Standing as Washington Targets the Court

Karim Khan is gone, removed in last week's secret ballot, and Netanyahu welcomed the ouster and said the dismissal "exposes the truth" about the court. He added that Rubio had told him Washington is "determined to act forcefully" against it. The Netanyahu and Gallant warrants Khan signed survive him, carried forward by the deputies who inherit the cases. Britain reportedly told Khan before the vote that it would not back his continuation, even as London stays one of the member states obligated to arrest Netanyahu on its soil.

ASSESSMENT

Removing Khan changes who signed the warrants and changes nothing about them, and the deputies inheriting his cases are why Jerusalem's win reads thinner than the headline. Washington is now going at the court itself, applying from outside the pressure its member states would not deliver from within. Britain reportedly pulled its backing from the prosecutor it helped install while staying bound to arrest Netanyahu on British soil, which leaves the ICC a pressure instrument its own guarantors no longer trust and cannot set down [Kenneth Roth is already insisting the cases proceed, and on the mechanics he is right].

Gunfire at Toronto's Jewish Bakeries, and a Task Force for an Answer

Overnight, someone put a bullet through the window of a Kiva's Bagel Bar in midtown Toronto and smashed a window at a second Kiva's shop fourteen kilometers north, near Bathurst and Steeles. No one was hurt. Toronto's police opened the morning with the hate-crime unit and the guns-and-gangs task force, called the two hits connected and hate-motivated, and named no suspect. Mayor Olivia Chow called them "targeted attacks." Melissa Lantsman, the Jewish deputy leader of the Conservatives, called them "a targeted campaign of intimidation on one community" and told Ottawa that task forces and statements "don't quell a community's anxiety — they just insult it." Gideon Sa'ar heard the news mid-meeting in Jerusalem with a CRIF delegation that had come over a foiled French synagogue plot, and told Canada to confront the wave.

ASSESSMENT

A bagel chain shot up before dawn draws a mayor's condemnation, a hate-crime unit, and a gang task force by mid-morning — the front end Western police keep getting faster at, and still one rung short of an arrest and two short of a sentence. CIJA reads the mix correctly: anti-Zionist street rhetoric, local criminal muscle, Iranian-backed proxies, and ISIS-inspired copycats now draw from one well. The French cache Sa'ar's visitors came to describe and the Toronto gunfire that interrupted the meeting run on the same current. A community that has learned to read these mornings knows the difference between being condemned and being guarded, and a task force with no suspect is the condemnation.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- *Jerusalem Post*: The IDF shot down an unarmed Hezbollah reconnaissance drone over the Ali Taher ridge, filming Israeli troops inside the security zone.
- *Jerusalem Post*: The Alma Center warns a coordinated Iran-Hezbollah strike on Haifa Bay could cripple the rigs and desalination plants behind most of Israel's power and water. The exposure is concentration — a handful of assets carry the load, so even a precautionary shutdown is the strategic win Tehran wants.
- *Times of Israel*: Ukraine struck a Caspian Sea vessel its envoy to Israel says was moving Iranian arms to Russia. Tehran, offering no evidence, called the hit "at Israel's behest" and vowed to answer.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- *Ynet News*: Bahrain's King Hamad initiated the call with Herzog and asked that it be made public, the first such disclosure in years. He advertised the Abraham Accords the week the Houthis declared a blockade on his Saudi neighbor.
- *The Jerusalem Post*: The cabinet approved Vivian Aisen as ambassador to Colombia, part of Sa'ar's effort to rebuild the Latin American ties that frayed across the war.
- *The Jerusalem Post*: An INSS study finds EU and World Bank money, not Arab-state support, is what kept the Palestinian Authority from full economic collapse. Brussels underwrites the government whose payments to terrorists' families Israel docks from its tax transfers.
- *JNS*: Andy Slaughter, the Burnham government's new solicitor general, is under fire over resurfaced 2010 photos of him meeting Hamas officials in Gaza on a Friends of Al-Aqsa trip with Jeremy Corbyn. He will now advise Britain on terrorism prosecutions and proscription decisions.

Public Diplomacy & Media

- *Times of Israel*: Some 300 families of September 11 victims signed a petition to bar New York mayor Zohran Mamdani from the 25th-anniversary commemoration at Ground Zero, citing his minimizing of the attacks and his defense of figures tied to terror groups.
- *Israel Hayom*: The White House's official TikTok set cockpit footage of the Iran strikes to Katy Perry's "Firework," captioned "Iran was warned," and drew 6.3 million views. Perry disavowed it, saying she was never asked and does not condone her song scoring a military strike.

Domestic & Law

- *Israel Hayom*: The National Insurance Institute is demanding some 2,700 recognized October 7 casualties repay roughly NIS 15 million it advanced for alternative treatments, after the funds went to flights, smartphones, and appliances.
- *Israel Hayom*: Yifat Ben Chai Segev, chair of the Second Authority's newly seated broadcasting council, resigned live on air and handed her appointment back to the communications minister, citing an 'absurd situation.'
- *Arutz Sheva*: The Vaad HaYeshivos is rolling out a communal cost-of-living program from the start of Elul, an organized answer to the stipend sanctions on yeshiva students who do not report for service.
- *Jerusalem Post*: Police arrested a 39-year-old Maghar resident for incitement after he posted on the Gilad Farm attack video that 'settler pigs' should be hunted down, that 'not a single pig settler' should remain.
- *Ynet*: Ra'am will hold the first candidate primary in its history on August 22, choosing its Knesset slate through a members' vote no longer routed through the Islamic Movement's Shura Council.
- *JNS*: Former Knesset member Einat Wilf launched a new party, Oz, running on constitutional reform and what she frames as Israel's war over its own narrative.

Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- *JNS*: The plan to convert Volkswagen's Osnabrück plant into a Rafael line for Iron Dome components is still alive, German reporting says, with Qatar's 17% VW stake — the reported veto notwithstanding — not actually being used to kill it. Rafael keeps widening its European footprint on the continent's rearmament, a €3.5 billion Greek David's Sling and SPYDER order signed last week, which is the demand Doha's stake is positioned to slow.
- *Globes*: Check Point, the flagship of Israeli cyber, has shed nearly 30% of its share price since January and reports second-quarter results Thursday against a consensus of barely 1.5% revenue growth — the number that decides whether the slump is the market or the company.
- *Jerusalem Post*: The cabinet approved Netanyahu's proposal barring imports made with forced labor, instructing the Economy Ministry to draft enforcement rules within 90 days and lining Israel up with the trade-compliance standards its main partners already impose.

- *Israel Hayom*: The eleventh “discounted housing” lottery drew 7,922 units across nineteen towns and, for the first time, reserved roughly half of them for active reservists — half of that share for combat troops — out of nearly 115,000 registered households.

Culture, Religion & Society

- *The Jerusalem Post*: A beach-cleanup deputy sweeping Ashdod’s sand for tourists’ lost jewelry turned up a mid-5th-century BCE silver Siglos from Cyprus, the first of its kind ever recorded in Israel. Israel’s archaeological floor is, as ever, closer than the people walking on it assume.
- *JNS*: Sifting First Temple-period fill beneath the Tower of David, archaeologists pulled a mold for casting a woman’s face out of the soil — the first figurine production mold ever found in Jerusalem.
- *Israel Hayom*: Maj. Gen. (res.) Aviezer Yaari, who ran Military Intelligence’s Syria branch when the Yom Kippur War broke, has died at 96. He tried to warn before the war and was rebuked for it — the failure the Agranat Commission was convened to dissect.
- *Times of Israel*: Kozo Okamoto, the last surviving member of the Japanese Red Army squad that murdered 26 people at Lod Airport in 1972, has died — one of the wounded, a Puerto Rican pastor, says he found forgiveness for him years ago.
- *Israel Hayom*: Britain’s national dish began with Sephardi and Portuguese Jews who fled the Inquisition and brought cold fried fish to England, prepared before Shabbat so it could be eaten the one day cooking is forbidden.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Lebanon disarmament stalls on the mechanism** — Beirut refuses any IDF role in verifying Hezbollah’s disarmament, and a Lebanese source calls August the south’s decisive month. Israel will not withdraw before it destroys the tunnels and stores, and the timeline hangs on who checks the weapons.
- **The push to reopen the north** — Netanyahu reportedly talked Lindsey Graham out of lobbying Trump to widen the war into Lebanon. The impulse rides into Tuesday’s summit, where the pressure for a second front comes from Washington itself.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **The Houthi blockade reaches Saudi oil** — Houthi strikes on Saudi Aramco and Jizan sites have cut Red Sea traffic through Bab el-Mandeb to a months-low. A struck tanker or a full closure of the strait pulls Riyadh back into the Yemen war within days.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **Ramallah takes “settler terror” to the UN** — Abbas is appealing to the UN and Arab leaders over what he calls systemic settler violence in Judea and Samaria. The appeal, timed to the summit, aims at a Security Council or Arab-bloc move Israel cannot block.

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