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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

Tuesday, July 28

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE The consulate round is the tell the bakery windows were not: whoever is paying does not care whether the muzzle is pointed at a bagel counter or a chancery, only that the shooter films it and collects. That is the whole design of the model — a regime that wants Jews shot in Canada rents the trigger and keeps its own hands a courier and a payment app away [the network prices a Jewish storefront and an American consulate at the same day rate]. Canada's police keep getting faster at the near end and stall one rung short of the paymaster every time, and a task force that arrests shooters but never reaches the account behind them is one built to run indefinitely.

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One Washington meeting now decides the Iran strike, the Turkish jets, Lebanon, and Gaza's force — and Israel holds the pen on none of them.

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“It is not what the nations say that matters, but what the Jews do,” Ben-Gurion held — and this morning the founder’s rule runs backward. Netanyahu flew to Washington without reporters aboard, seeking a meeting Israel once did not have to ask for, and arriving with the least pull it has held over this White House. Israel is winning every exchange in the field and sitting at its highest alert with a strike folder it has not been cleared to open, while the war it most wants fought waits on the man across the table.

FLASH BRIEF

- **Iran:** Netanyahu carries the strike decision to Washington as Trump keeps his pause on the strikes and keeps the trigger. *See The War Today.*
- **Gaza:** Southern Command pushes the concrete berm west into a Gaza City neighborhood, turning the closed zone into a border. *See The War Today.*
- **Judea and Samaria:** Twenty-six battalions hold a lethal terror surge as officers warn the next rung is a popular uprising. *See The War Today.*
- **Haredi draft:** An expanded nine-justice panel hears the arrest-freeze law the government pointedly sent no one to defend. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Likud slate:** Netanyahu locks eight reserved slots as an N12 poll puts Eisenkot’s new list first, 23 to 22. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Settler-violence charge:** Israel prosecutes the offenders as 600 former security chiefs carry a “settler terrorism” charge to Washington the caseload does not support. *See Inside Israel.*
- **US leverage:** Trump overrides Israel’s objection to selling Turkey F-35s and signs a Saudi nuclear deal with no normalization condition. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Casualty counts:** A Brussels journalists’ federation quietly deletes eight Gaza names after terror groups claimed the men as fighters. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Election interference:** Shin Bet names Turkey alongside Iran running covert online operations to widen Israel’s internal rifts before October. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Canada:** A third Toronto shooting ties the Jewish-bakery attacks to an Iran-linked network paying local gunmen to film them. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Lebanon:** A US-led Israel-Lebanon round opens in Rome on August 4, on the very pullback Beirut wants conceded first. *See Developments to Watch.*

What used to be spread across a season of shuttle diplomacy has collapsed into a single meeting, and Israel sits on the wrong side of the table for the length of it. The pattern holds even where the pressure runs the other way — the “settler terrorism” charge reached the White House this week on the letterhead of Israel’s own former security chiefs, and the UN on Ramallah’s, the case against Jerusalem routed through the same rooms as the decisions for it. What the country still moves on its own has narrowed to the ground it physically holds: the berm pushing west into Gaza City, the twenty-six battalions absorbing the terror wave in Samaria. Beyond that ground, it is a supplicant carrying a strike folder it has not been cleared to open.

The War Today

Netanyahu Brings the Nuclear File to a Washington That Holds the Trigger

Netanyahu left a military base without reporters aboard and routed his plane over Italy and France for his first White House meeting since the Iran war opened, carrying what he says is proof that Tehran shifted centrifuges into the deep complex under Pickaxe Mountain and rebuilt its missile and drone lines while professing interest in a deal. Trump extended his pause on the expanded strikes, said he has “very deep talks” running with “not much time” to spare, and promised “very strong” military action if they fail. Oman and Iran have moved toward a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and revive the memorandum, though Tehran’s negotiators say they refused to leave the strait’s southern corridor open. Drones came down over Jordan for a second straight day from a source the IDF has not identified, the Houthis claimed a strike that halted Saudi Aramco’s Abqaiq plant, and more strikes were reported across northern Iraq. Statements attributed to Mojtaba Khamenei called the defense of Hezbollah a “strategic mandate,” a succession performing a command it may not hold.

ASSESSMENT

The pause hands Tehran back the one asset thirteen nights of American bombing were stripping from it, and the regime is pouring it into the concrete over Pickaxe Mountain that no strike ever reached — damaged, its own former intelligence chiefs concede, and nowhere near destroyed. Israel sits at its highest alert and has fired nothing, holding a strike folder it has not been cleared to open, while the call to widen or end the war it most wants fought waits on the man posting strike photos to his own feed. Jerusalem is already being told it will wear the blame if the coming round fails: it carries the risk, and Washington keeps the trigger. One meeting now settles the Iran strike, the F-35 sale to Turkey, the Lebanon pullback Netanyahu just refused Graham’s push to pre-empt, and the Gaza force, with the pen in Washington’s hand.

✠ Closed Dossier: *The Permission Layer* — The strike folder Israel holds but cannot open — capability complete, the decision to use it lodged in Washington — is exactly the permission layer this Dossier argues the war was built to install and outlast. ##### The Yellow Line Moves West Into Gaza City Southern Command pushed its concrete berm west of Salah al-Din Road into a Gaza City neighborhood, widening the closed military zone deeper into the roughly seventy percent of the Strip Israel already holds. The air force and Shin Bet kept enforcing the disarmament the truce never wrote down. A strike in the south killed Amro Abu Alrish, a Nukhba operative who had helped hand an Israeli hostage back from Islamic Jihad captivity, along with a Hamas commander in a separate strike, and the 99th Division destroyed a tunnel route running hundreds of meters east of the line in the north. Israel is reported to be returning some sixty Gazans detained after October 7, which would be its largest such release since the truce took hold.

ASSESSMENT

The berm has stopped marking a line anyone means to negotiate back and started marking a border, and the seventy percent behind it is what actually governs Gaza this morning, whatever the Board of Peace paints over it. Reconstruction is supposed to follow disarmament. Washington dropped the weapons as a condition, so the sequence runs backward, and the targeting cell answers it one drone-maker and one Nukhba operative at a time. A detainee release and a stabilization force still short of a single pledged soldier are the reconstruction half of a bargain whose other half Hamas has kept every rifle out of.

The Judea and Samaria Surge Deepens as a Third Front Threatens

A lethal stretch across Judea and Samaria has the army running twenty-six battalions through the sector, and the week supplied the reasons. Four attackers were caught after they beat an off-duty soldier near Susya over the weekend and made off with his rifle, two taken by an elite unit and one turning himself in. Central Command's deadly incident near Tal is now under a friendly-fire investigation. Before the picture had cleared, the chair of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee fired off a letter demanding looser rules of engagement, and Netanyahu and Israel Katz ordered a set of countermeasures. The Efraim Brigade ran a broad sweep against the smuggling networks that move illegal crossers into Israel, reportedly arresting around thirty, and Central Command lifted the labor ban it had imposed after the Gilad Farm shooting, clearing Palestinian workers to return to the Israeli communities tomorrow even as the US embassy extended its own staff travel warning.

ASSESSMENT

Twenty-six battalions committed here are twenty-six not on the Iran line or in Gaza, and the officers running the surge are the ones telling reporters the next rung is a popular uprising they will struggle to stop. You can win every raid in the sector and still not be standing where the next cell decides to open the second Gaza. The rush to loosen the rules of engagement before the friendly-fire probe has even reported is the coalition reaching past what the incident will bear.

Inside Israel

Nine Justices Hear the Arrest-Freeze Law the Government Won't Defend

The High Court opened arguments this morning before an expanded nine-justice panel on the temporary-order law freezing arrest and prosecution of yeshiva students who ignore their call-up. The law passed July 14 and Justice Grosskopf froze it the next day. The government sent no one to defend it, on Deri's instruction. Baharav-Miara had already urged the bench to strike it down. She called it a group-immunity mechanism, one that keeps the duty to enlist while lifting every penalty for refusing it. The Knesset's own counsel argued only the procedural defect, that the committee smuggled a "new subject" into the bill, and its representative told the court there is probably no choice but to repeal. Some 72,000 haredi men aged 18 to 24 are ignoring

orders while the IDF says it needs 12,000 recruits now and Zamir calls the law inconceivable. Two weeks ago 230 haredim enlisted to the Maalot Tzur and Kodkod tracks through protests staged outside the recruitment offices. One of Maalot Tzur's founders, Rabbi Yaakov Farber z"l, died at 32 last week. In some study halls his death was marked with kugel handed out under a placard reading "when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy."

ASSESSMENT

A government that will not send a lawyer to defend its own law has said what it thinks the law is worth. Netanyahu wanted the exemption written down before the election, and the arrest-freeze delivers that whether the panel strikes it or not. Five of the nine justices wrote the conscription rulings it was built to evade. The men quietly closing the manpower gap the law widens answer in a register the Knesset does not record — two hundred enlisted last week through the protests, and a placard went up celebrating the death of the rabbi who built their track. Disgraceful.

Netanyahu Tightens His Hold on the Likud Slate as the Poll Slips

After three postponements, and a day after the party's own court denied him a route around the primary, the Likud Central Committee approved Netanyahu's eight reserved slots through No. 29. The grant hands him unprecedented control over a third of the realistic slate. Katz's companion plan, opening the district races to sitting ministers and MKs while shutting out new contenders, carried by six votes. The Jerusalem branch then erupted over uncounted "fraudulent" envelopes as members demanded a revote. Turnout ran near 73 percent over rare public dissent led by Bitan, and the primary stays set for August 17. The same night an N12 poll put Eisenkot's Yashar first at 23 to Likud's 22, with the anti-Netanyahu bloc at 60 seats short of a majority. The preferred-premier question came out even at 38 to 38, after Eisenkot led 43 to 34 two weeks ago. Tropper and Hendel's Reservists' Zionist Home cleared the threshold at four, the seats that build the bloc's 60. Religious Zionism's central committee picked a chardal slate around Smotrich, Strock and Sukkot as its moderates walked, leaving the party at the threshold, and Ben-Gvir ruled out running with it.

ASSESSMENT

A party that must buy its leader a third of its own slate, and pass the rest by six disputed votes at the last box counted, is not standing on confident ground. Netanyahu got the slots and lost the escape hatch. The tribunal left the August primary in place, so the list he now controls still faces the members he spent a month trying to bypass. The mandates he needs sit with parties splintering beside him, a Religious Zionism hovering at the threshold and an Otzma Yehudit that has ruled out a merger. And every rival who says he would rather not sit with the haredi parties has already left the door open — the surest sign the draft crisis outlives the election supposedly fought over it.

Smotrich Fights the 'Settler Violence' Label as the Charge Reaches Washington

At the security conference Smotrich called the "settler violence" charge a blood libel, an antisemitic campaign built on a fringe phenomenon. It lands

on the day 600 former security chiefs carried “settler terrorism” into the White House ahead of the Netanyahu meeting, and Ramallah carried the same charge to the UN. His Civil Administration answered the week’s attacks by demolishing large structures across northern Samaria, one of them a four-story building of some 800 square meters. The campaign to free Tal Yinon Dardik intensified after the Jordan Valley activist was hospitalized on a three-week hunger strike. He is held in administrative detention over intelligence that he meant to attack Palestinians, and is a suspect in a March raid on a Palestinian village. Defense Minister Katz visited him in prison over the weekend. Two more activists were detained crossing from the Hermon into Syrian territory, part of a coalition-backed push to plant Jewish communities in southern Syria. The own-side violence is real and prosecuted — arson at two mosques over the weekend, and the arrests that followed.

ASSESSMENT

The violence is real and it is a scourge, and the response that fits a scourge is enforcement — arrest the men who commit it, as Israel did with the mosque arsonists this weekend, and hold the policy line. Roughly 110 verified Israeli-civilian incidents a year against thousands of Palestinian attacks is a caseload to be policed, not a movement to be confessed, and “settler terrorism” is the machinery that promotes a criminal few into an indictment of the whole country. The promotion travels on the letterhead of Israel’s own retired security chiefs, timed to the summit [handing the prosecutors in the room a case the arson alone never could]. The discipline is to curb the criminality without amplifying it: prosecute the offenders, keep the enforcement quiet and firm, and stop doing our enemies’ argument for them by turning a police matter into a confession.

Israel and the World

Netanyahu Manufactures the Meeting Israel Used to Be Owed

Netanyahu meets Trump at the White House today. It is their first sit-down in five months, and the first since the Iran war began in late February. The last one came two weeks before the strikes. He landed the invitation only after weeks of working for it, leaks included, and sealed it by attaching the trip to Lindsey Graham’s funeral. The day before, aboard Air Force One, Trump waved off Netanyahu’s public warning against selling Turkey F-35s. “Nobody tells me what we should be selling,” he said, calling Erdogan’s Turkey “a tremendous ally.” Washington signed a civil-nuclear deal with Riyadh that carried no normalization condition, and Trump added one afterward by Truth Social post. Saudi commentators close to the palace now insist recognition was never a formal term and float turning to China if the deal stalls. Both leaders face elections weeks apart, Israel’s in late October and the US midterms just after, and their immediate interests on Iran pull opposite.

ASSESSMENT

Israel is arriving with the least pull it has held over Washington since Trump took office. The files waiting in the room are the ones Jerusalem no longer sits at: the Turkish stealth fighters Trump says nobody can tell him not to sell, and the Saudi reactor whose normalization clause exists only on a Truth Social post, with Riyadh already floating Beijing as its walk-away. Netanyahu's entire post-October 7 case is that he alone rebuilds Israel's strategic position in lockstep with Washington [the lockstep now runs one way]. He can still fly home with the photograph, and this year that is the whole trip.

Gaza's 'Journalists' and 'Medics' Keep Turning Up as Fighters

The International Federation of Journalists, a Brussels federation speaking for hundreds of thousands of media workers, quietly deleted eight names from its Gaza casualty list after Hamas and Islamic Jihad published obituaries claiming the men as their own fighters — the second major watchdog to walk back its dead after the Committee to Protect Journalists began the same review weeks ago. Among the removed was a camera operator for the Houthis' Yemen TV and a “woman journalist” whose husband commanded a Palestinian Islamic Jihad manufacturing unit. The IFJ tally had already traveled through the Guardian, CNN, NBC, the BBC, the AP and AFP. HonestReporting counts more than five hundred articles built on CPJ's figures across the New York Times, Reuters and others, and the Times cited “more than 100 journalists killed” two weeks after CPJ opened its own review. A parallel review of terror-group death notices identified at least eighteen Gazans mourned as doctors, nurses and hospital staff who were later claimed as operatives — among them a nursing-association head the International Council of Nurses eulogized as a leader of the profession, pictured by Hamas in full military gear with a loaded rifle.

ASSESSMENT

The number was the weapon, and it did its work long before the footnotes caught up — a manufactured toll of “martyred journalists” and “targeted medics” that ran in five hundred articles and indicted Israel across every Western desk that carried it. Now two watchdogs are deleting the same names their own combatant-exclusion rules should have caught, doing it without a correction, and the New York Times keeps citing the discredited figure rather than covering the retraction [the libel prints on the front page and the correction never runs at all]. The trackers laundered terror rosters into casualty ledgers because that is the product the donors and the courts pay for, and a delegitimization campaign scored by headlines does not need the count to be true, only to have traveled.

Turkey Joins Iran in Working Israel's October Election

Senior Israeli security officials identified Turkey as running a covert social-media operation to sway the October 27 election, disrupt the campaign and widen the fractures inside Israeli society, placing Ankara beside Iran among the foreign hands working Israel's first national vote since October 7. Shin Bet chief David Zini laid the indications before a classified Knesset intelligence subcommittee, alongside a briefing on tracing the covert money moving into domestic political activity, with Central Elections Committee chairman and High Court deputy president Noam Sohlberg in the room. Tehran's

method, by the security establishment's account, runs on fictitious accounts, AI-generated credibility and Israelis recruited through deception or cash to carry the messaging into the street, and its goal is reportedly not a winner but the rift itself, on the logic that a divided society cannot fight well on any front. State Comptroller Englman found that nine years after Israel first identified the danger, it has no national policy and no agency that owns the response.

ASSESSMENT

Israel intercepts missiles well and has left the front that runs through its own feeds undefended for nine years — a threat the Shin Bet named in 2017 that still has no national policy and no owner, which is the whole of the Comptroller's finding. Turkey stepping in beside Iran is the sharper development: a NATO member now running the same disinformation playbook as the regime it claims to oppose, both reading the same opening in an Israel heading into its first election since the massacre, a society already raw enough that Tehran does not need to choose a winner, only to pull the seams wider. Against a launcher Israel has an interceptor. Against a swarm of fictitious accounts and a rented Israeli influencer it has a Comptroller's report noting nobody is in charge.

Toronto's Third Shooting Ties the Bakery Attacks to a Hired Network

Gunfire hit the United States Consulate General in downtown Toronto before dawn yesterday, the second shooting at the building in under five months, leaving a shell casing and a scarred facade after the officer posted there watched a white Honda Accord with no plates flee and police broke off the chase at 140 kilometers an hour. It closed a weekend that had opened with two branches of Kiva's, a Jewish-owned bagel chain, taking fire overnight: one storefront shattered, the other struck by a round, the same dark SUV believed used at both, no one hurt. Police are working all three as connected and hate-motivated and have named no suspect. What they have named is the method, young men recruited through encrypted apps and paid to shoot up synagogues, Jewish schools, and now Jewish businesses on the condition that they film it, the source of the money still unestablished. A US indictment ties the building's March shooting to a figure prosecutors place inside Kata'ib Hezbollah and the IRGC, who ran a network paying local criminals in cities around the world to hit targets exactly like these. B'nai Brith counts twenty-seven violent antisemitic incidents in Canada through mid-July, double all of last year, and Ottawa's reply so far is a run of condemnations.

ASSESSMENT

The consulate round is the tell the bakery windows were not: whoever is paying does not care whether the muzzle is pointed at a bagel counter or a chancery, only that the shooter films it and collects. That is the whole design of the model — a regime that wants Jews shot in Canada rents the trigger and keeps its own hands a courier and a payment app away [the network prices a Jewish storefront and an American consulate at the same day rate]. Canada's police keep getting faster at the near end and stall one rung short of the paymaster every time, and a task force that arrests shooters but never reaches the account behind them is one built to run indefinitely.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- *Walla*: A routine traffic stop near Modi'in became a cross-district chase when a driver ferrying two illegal residents tried to run down the officer checking him and fled under fire, arrested hours later in Ashdod alongside a brother who was employing a third illegal worker at a renovation site.
- *Jerusalem Post*: A new Jerusalem Center report maps the parallel Al-Mahdi and Al-Mustafa school networks through which Hezbollah and Iran run roughly 22 schools and 47,000 Lebanese children on a martyrdom curriculum, feeding the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts that graduate teenagers into the militia at sixteen.
- *Israel Hayom*: A week after Saudi jets hit Houthi arms depots in Hodeidah, the Iran-backed militia declared the kingdom's oil facilities "in the target bank" and claimed a reach of more than 1,500 kilometers into Saudi territory.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- *Israel Hayom*: Iran raised an iron gallows in the Isfahan square where January's protests broke out and summoned the families of ten condemned prisoners for farewell visits. Tehran is staging the executions in the open while the world's attention sits on Hormuz — a cornered regime performing strength at home.
- *JNS*: A report found the US Department of Health and Human Services routed roughly \$80 million in grants to groups with documented terror ties. The agency would say only that it acts "whenever there is evidence" of abuse.
- *JNS*: Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar signed two agreements with his Congolese counterpart in Jerusalem and sent three tons of medical aid to Kinshasa amid an Ebola outbreak.

Public Diplomacy & Media

- *Jewish Insider*: Israel and AIPAC dominated the final debate in Michigan's Democratic Senate primary, with Abdul El-Sayed campaigning openly against the group's \$46 million spend while Rep. Haley Stevens declined even to say the word "AIPAC."
- *Times of Israel*: Boy George released "We Will Dance Again," a reggae single that defends Israel's war, names the Nova massacre, and tells the boycotters "if you're ever confused: I stand with the Jews."
- *Algemeiner*: NBA forward Kyle Kuzma ridiculed Zohran Mamdani's video conceding he has no authority to arrest Netanyahu in September as "a mayor playing president."
- *Jewish Insider*: Qatar's emir publicized, on the palace's own channels, a Doha condolence visit from a rabbinic delegation that included the chief rabbi of Iran — a rare on-record nod to Jewish ties from the Gulf state that bankrolls Al Jazeera.

- *JNS*: UN Watch's Hillel Neuer asked Secretary-General Guterres to act on a "shocking conflict of interest" — Tlaleng Mofokeng, the UN health rapporteur once reprimanded for telling Netanyahu to "f*** off," is running for mayor of Johannesburg while still holding her UN mandate.
- *The JC*: An elite Irish ultimate-frisbee club, Ranelagh Ultimate, vowed to boycott Israel's New Age at next month's world championship in Limerick and pressed the sport's federation to bar Israeli teams or strip their flag.

Domestic & Law

- *Times of Israel*: Baharav-Miara asked the High Court to freeze and ultimately strike the coalition's June law pulling the police internal-investigations department out from under the State Attorney's Office and handing the justice minister a say over its appointments. The right spent years arguing that the old arrangement gave the guild a unit tilted against its own targets — the attorney general now calls unwinding it a 'politicization' of law enforcement.
- *Israel Hayom*: Footage circulating in Haredi channels showed donors funding a celebratory food distribution to kollels marking the death of Rabbi Yaakov Farber — the 32-year-old founder of a Haredi military-service track, a father of six dead of cancer — as the passing of 'one of the leaders of apostasy in our generation.'
- *Ynet News*: Jerusalem police arrested a 58-year-old reporter for a Haredi magazine in Kiryat Ye'arim on suspicion of possessing child sexual abuse material, seizing his laptop and phone for forensic examination.
- *Arutz Sheva*: Ben-Gvir told the Yediot conference that Marwan Barghouti had passed word through his lawyers urging Israel's Arab parties to unite and reverse the prison-service reforms that stripped security prisoners of their privileges, which the minister offered as proof that Israel's jails are 'no longer a paradise for terrorists.'
- *Times of Israel*: Eisenkot's Yashar hung Hebrew billboards at the Cyprus airport telling vacationing Israelis to enjoy themselves and then fly home to vote, courting the roughly million Israelis abroad who — with no absentee ballot — swing elections by boarding a plane, the same bloc Regev's ministry has reportedly weighed thinning Ben Gurion flights to keep out.

Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- *Globes*: Jared Kushner's Affinity Partners sold a quarter of its Phoenix Financial holding for NIS 1.05 billion, eighteen months after buying into Israel's largest insurer and riding the stock up roughly 420%. Affinity stays the single largest shareholder, banking a NIS 3.4 billion paper gain while keeping the top seat.
- *Jerusalem Post*: Israeli counter-drone firm Autonomous Guard landed a follow-on order from an Asian police force plus an MOU worth up to \$20 million, as Israel's defense exporters tilt toward Asia-Pacific while Western markets tighten politically after the war. Europe still buys the majority of the \$14.8 billion Israel exported in 2024, but the new customers and joint-production deals increasingly sit east.

- *Globes*: Israeli biotech Entera Bio raised a \$275 million private placement, more than double its pre-deal market cap, financing it through 2030 and a Phase III trial of its oral osteoporosis drug. Existing backer BVF led the round, a concentrated wager that Entera's pill can replace an injectable at scale.
- *Israel Hayom*: Israeli startup Enigma closed a \$71 million seed round, among the largest at that stage in Israel, less than a year after two Unit 8200 alumni founded it to build software for physical AI and robotics.

Culture, Religion & Society

- *Times of Israel*: The Antiquities Authority turned up the first mold ever found in Jerusalem for the First Temple-era female figurines — likely the goddess Asherah — that surface in nearly every dig in the city, proving at least some were cast locally rather than imported. The idols the Judean kings and prophets fought to stamp out were being manufactured in the capital itself.
- *Ynet News*: Maj. Gen. Aviezer Yaari, who warned five days out that Egypt and Syria were massing to attack in 1973 and was reprimanded and ordered to parrot Military Intelligence's line that "nothing was happening," has died at 96. The concept that earned him the rebuke is the one every commission since has had to relearn.
- *Jewish News UK*: Theodor Herzl's grandparents, brought from Belgrade, will be reinterred beside him on Mount Herzl on August 5 with Netanyahu and Herzog attending — the grandfather a disciple of the proto-Zionist Rabbi Judah Alkalai who shaped the young Herzl's thinking.
- *Algemeiner*: Israeli high-schoolers took 13 medals across the international chemistry, physics and biology Olympiads in a single week, two of them gold at the chemistry contest in Tashkent. The campaign to keep Israelis out of those rooms never reaches the scoreboard.
- *Jerusalem Post*: A Tzohar poll of nearly 3,000 religious Zionists at its annual conference found 79 percent would rather settle Israel's religion-and-state fights through grassroots dialogue than legislation, against 15 percent who trust a Knesset bill to do it. The community the coalition treats as its base is telling it the legislative route is the wrong tool.
- *JNS*: Security forces caught a looter in Area C carrying metal detectors and thousands of Persian, Hellenistic and Hasmonean coins dug illegally out of the ground of Judea and Samaria.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Rome opens the Lebanon table August 4** — Washington confirmed a new US-led Israel-Lebanon round in Rome on August 4-6, trading a phased IDF withdrawal for Hezbollah's disarmament. Israel will not pull back before

it clears the tunnels and stores, so the round opens on the precondition Beirut wants gone.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Tehran's media chart Melania's routine** — Iran's IRGC-linked Tasnim and state-run Mehr published a video mapping the First Lady's New York movements and security. It urges "freedom fighters" to kill her and threatens Barron Trump by name. The regime is targeting the family of the man weighing whether to reopen the bombing, and that rarely cools a decision.
- **The Gulf moves from absorbing to answering** — Saudi Arabia said it reserves the right to respond to the Houthi strike that halted Aramco's Abqaiq plant. Kuwait blamed militias in Iraq for the drones over its neighbor's oilfields. The Gulf states the axis has shelled for weeks now threaten to answer, giving Tehran cause to hit its hosts first.
- **Iraqi militias test the American pause** — Iranian state media claimed Iran-aligned fighters downed a US drone over Anbar. The US-led coalition intercepted several more over Erbil and Soran overnight. The militias that promise to enter if Washington resumes are already firing at US assets, a second front primed for the order.
- **The Houthis eye a second strait** — Yemen's internationally recognized foreign minister warned that the Houthis mean to copy Iran's Hormuz playbook at Bab el-Mandeb. Emboldened by a thin response, they would choke the Red Sea approach to Suez, which the US Navy is already stretched to contest.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **US casualties and thin support box in the strike call** — The Pentagon quietly cut four troops killed in the Iran fighting from its official war toll. A Reuters-Ipsos poll found only one in three Americans back the war. Trump weighs reopening the bombing over a public turning against it and a death count his own department is understating.

Home Front & Politics

- **Nahal Oz fights its own thinning guard** — A single Walla report says Southern Command means to cut the protection force at the kibbutz nearest Gaza, days after residents found an IDF drone in their fields. Residents who lived October 7 are threatening to take the drawdown to the Chief of Staff. The manpower shortfall holding 26 battalions in Judea and Samaria is now reaching the fence-line communities.

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