

DAILY BRIEFING

The Dispatch

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MAIN STORY: ISRAEL TIGHTENS MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE ON LEBANON OVER HEZBOLLAH

- Israeli Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir toured Beaufort Castle (Qalaat al-Shaqif), which Israeli forces seized in late May in the deepest push into Lebanese territory since the ceasefire, and vowed the IDF is “prepared to transition rapidly to offensive operations should the ceasefire be violated.” He called Hezbollah “exhausted,” said it is “now relying on its Iranian patron to save it,” and toured an Israeli-held tunnel beneath the ridge as part of the visit, telling troops Lebanon remains obligated under the US-brokered framework to clear the area of Hezbollah fighters and infrastructure.
- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said unnamed Christian villages in south Lebanon had “asked to be annexed” to Israel for protection from Hezbollah, and separately vowed Israeli troops would stay in the south “as long as necessary” to protect northern Israel. Rmeish municipality, in the Marjeyoun area, flatly rejected the claim, calling Netanyahu a liar and saying it has “no power nor the legal right” to seek annexation while reaffirming its loyalty to the Lebanese flag.
- Zamir credited Israeli military pressure, not diplomacy, for producing the Lebanon deal, singling out the IDF’s 36th Division for its Litani River crossing and Northern Command’s broader campaign against Hezbollah as what made the agreement possible.
- Israel’s ambassador to Washington, Yechiel Leiter, said the Lebanese Army is sidelining Shiite troops and officers unwilling to confront Hezbollah, framing the move as evidence of Beirut’s growing readiness to act against the group under the new framework.
- Leiter argued the framework carries no formal deadline but is moving fast regardless, noting that CENTCOM commander Admiral Brad Cooper met the Lebanese Army in Beirut to prepare pilot-zone implementation plans the day after Friday’s signing.
- Leiter said Israel and Lebanon will form a joint working group of “topographers, geographers and mapmakers” to resolve border issues and prepare a “shelf agreement” for full peace, to be finalized once Hezbollah is dismantled enough to allow “full and secure peace.”

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

Israel is running a coordinated military and diplomatic pressure campaign on Lebanon that pairs a declared Hezbollah “exhausted” narrative with an explicit threat of rapid offensive resumption, sig-

naling the Beaufort foothold and the security-zone posture are durable pressure, not a temporary staging position. Leiter's account of Lebanese Army moves against Shiite officers, paired with the Cooper visit and the shelf-agreement architecture, shows Israel building a compliance narrative around Beirut's cooperation even absent a binding timeline. Netanyahu's unconfirmed and swiftly denied annexation claim adds a separate and more combustible track that tests Lebanese sovereignty red lines regardless of its factual basis, and Rmeish's blunt rebuttal shows little tolerance in the south for that framing. The near-term test is whether the Lebanese Army's posture in the Beaufort/Litani corridor and the promised border working group produce a verifiable step, such as the pilot-zone withdrawal Israeli media put one to three weeks away or a named disarmament milestone, or whether the annexation rhetoric and the Shiite-purge claims instead harden domestic opposition to the framework inside Lebanon.

IRAN

- Iran's state funeral for assassinated Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei entered its procession phase, with his flag-draped coffin and those of four family members killed in the February 28 US-Israeli strike carried by truck along a 10-kilometer route through Tehran toward Mehrabad International Airport, bound next for Qom, then Najaf and Karbala in Iraq, before burial in Mashhad. New Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei again did not appear in public on Sunday, even as his three brothers, Mostafa, Meysam, and Masoud, prayed beside the coffins, deepening questions about his condition since the strike that killed his father. Delegations from more than 100 countries attended, including one of the largest from Houthi-run Yemen, in ceremonies analysts describe as a test of the postwar theocracy's ability to project political continuity and popular legitimacy. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi used the sidelines to meet Hezbollah and Hamas delegations (the latter led by Mohammed Darwish), calling Hezbollah's fight against Israel "a source of pride for Lebanon and the Islamic world" and reaffirming that Iran's support for the Palestinian cause is unchanged. Unverified online speculation, prompted by a hairline discrepancy in a newly circulated video, questioned whether Khatam al-Anbiya spokesman Ebrahim Zolfaghari's wartime broadcasts used an AI-generated or digitally altered likeness for operational security.
- A reconstruction of the deadliest strike of the US-Israeli war, the February 28 US missile strike that hit a primary school in Minab and killed more than 100 children, found that the Pentagon possessed evidence almost immediately that the school had been struck. More than 120 days later, the Trump administration still has not accepted responsibility or released its investigation's findings, a silence compounded by Tehran's own politicization of the toll that has further clouded independent accounting of what happened.
- Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya joint military command warned Thursday that any oil tanker deviating from its approved Strait of Hormuz routes, or disregarding its navigation protocols, will face an "immediate and forceful response... endangering the security of the violating vessels," a threat that followed a US Central Command statement from a Bahrain meeting affirming "the free flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz." The Revolutionary Guard Corps has moved over the past 48 hours to close a gap in its control of the strait after ships stuck for weeks began breaking free via a US-backed southern route near Oman's coast, leaving Iran controlling only the more heavily mined northern route, with at least eight ships turning back Saturday after direct IRGC warnings and traffic falling further Sunday. Iran is separately moving to require vessels use its designated routes and eventually pay transit fees, upending decades of open passage through the waterway,

while French President Emmanuel Macron announced a UK-French mine-clearing naval mission for the southern route that Iran's foreign ministry rejected as unwarranted interference.

- Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who led the negotiations with Washington, said implementing the US memorandum is "difficult but possible," stressing that diplomacy must preserve the gains of the war and noting Tehran secured a clause protecting regional allies' territorial integrity and ending the war against them, added to the text the night Israel struck Beirut's Dahiyeh. In a state TV interview that was cut short mid-broadcast, drawing a protest from parliament's media office, Ghalibaf revealed Iran has exported more than 40 million barrels of oil since the US lifted its blockade under the memorandum, against zero in the prior 50 to 60 days, with hardliners stepping up criticism of the deal over the censored segments covering nuclear inspections, frozen assets, and a \$300 billion reconstruction credit. Separately, US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner and Iran's top negotiator Kazem Gharibabadi met with Qatari and Pakistani mediators in Doha, agreeing to resume talks after Khamenei's funeral with the Strait of Hormuz and Lebanon still the main sticking points. President Trump called the talks "very good," saying Iran's denuclearization is "moving along well."
- Araghchi, in the same funeral-sideline meetings, told Hezbollah's delegation that Tehran keeps pushing to end the war and the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, and that Iran has made a Lebanon ceasefire a non-negotiable clause of its Islamabad-brokered talks with Washington, one that has curbed but not stopped the fighting even as Hezbollah largely withholds retaliation against continuing Israeli strikes. Parliament Speaker Ghalibaf called on "all components of Lebanon" to implement the memorandum's Lebanon clause, saying doing so is essential to prevent civil strife.
- Government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said Iran is preparing to file a lawsuit against Israel and the United States over Khamenei's assassination, with the presidential legal office and foreign ministry compiling evidence. She added that some of the late leader's directives went unfulfilled during his lifetime and that "our most important task now is to implement his guidance and policies precisely."
- Iran deepened its outreach to Houthi-run Yemen on two fronts. Ambassador Ali Mohammad Rezaei returned to Houthi-controlled Sanaa aboard a Mahan Air flight on July 3, the first direct Iranian civilian flight into the city since 2015, which Tehran and the Houthis both framed as the opening move to break Saudi-led restrictions on Sanaa International Airport. Separately, Parliament Speaker Ghalibaf met in Tehran with Mohammed Al-Nuaimi, a member of the Houthi Supreme Political Council seen as a political ally rather than a core decision-maker, the second senior-level Houthi-Iran meeting in recent days. The meeting shows Tehran intends to keep signaling strategic alignment with the movement against the Saudi-led coalition and Yemen's internationally recognized government.

ISRAEL

- Shin Bet Director David Zini has agreed in principle to expand the agency's mandate for the first time into organized crime affecting Arab communities, conditioned on a NIS 1 billion to NIS 1.3 billion budget increase. A dedicated Shin Bet division would target illegal weapons trafficking and protection rackets with intelligence tools beyond police reach, including spyware and wiretapping, while legal limits on investigating ordinary crime stay in place. The push follows a study putting organized crime's toll on Israel's economy at roughly NIS 23 billion a year (NIS 8,000 per household),

driven by protection payments absorbing up to 5% of construction budgets, extortion reported by 93% of eastern Galilee farmers and 90% in the Negev, and car insurance premiums up 56% amid rising theft and vandalism. The Netanyahu cabinet voted unanimously to defy a Supreme Court ruling for the first time, declaring it will not recognize any decision, appointment or action by the Second Authority for Television and Radio's governing council, after the High Court ordered on June 17 that the council keep functioning despite lacking its legally required quorum. Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi and Justice Minister Yariv Levin, who authored the resolution, argued a court ruling "cannot confer authority that does not exist under the law," prompting opposition leader Yair Lapid to say the government "had turned criminal" and call it the country's "most serious constitutional crisis." The same institutional standoff extended to the state comptroller's office: the High Court froze comptroller-elect Michael Rabello's confirmation and ordered a repeat Knesset vote after ruling that MKs breached ballot secrecy by filming their choices in the deciding round, leaving Israel without a sitting comptroller once Matanyahu Englman's term expired. Amid the charged climate, Channel 12's Tel Aviv studio had its glass entrance door shattered, the third vandalism incident in months after two rounds of graffiti, following weeks of campaigns by right-wing activists and officials accusing the outlet's Sde Teiman coverage of bias, with no suspects identified. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir canceled his appearance at this week's UN Chiefs of Police Summit in New York after the Hind Rajab Foundation, with the Center for Constitutional Rights, filed a US Justice Department complaint seeking his prosecution and urged New York Attorney General Letitia James to investigate him over his prison policies, alleged war crimes and incitement. The Hind Rajab Foundation said sustained legal action and grassroots campaigning by the Palestinian Youth Movement forced the cancellation, calling it evidence that accountability efforts are starting to constrain Israeli officials' international travel. Netanyahu, who agreed with Trump on Friday to meet soon in Washington and drew Trump's "knows who the boss is" line, said the relationship remains "excellent," with the two sides seeing "eye to eye" in 99% of cases. He denied any US-Israel daylight on Iran, saying both want Iran's enriched uranium removed and its nuclear sites dismantled, and vowed Iran "will not be allowed to develop nuclear weapons" so long as he is prime minister. He rejected the charge that Israel is in a permanent state of war, pointing to the Abraham Accords and the new Israel-Lebanon deal as evidence ("with President Trump, we brought forth four peace deals"), and warned that anti-Israel movements bleed into anti-American sentiment, citing protesters who burn Israeli and American flags together and, at one rally, chanted for Trump's death. At a Habima Square rally in Tel Aviv demanding a state inquiry into the government's October 7 failures, Gil Dickmann, cousin of slain hostage Carmel Gat, confronted Netanyahu over his claim to have "returned all the abductees who were in the war," invoking the 50th anniversary of the death of Netanyahu's brother Yoni leading the 1976 Entebbe hostage-rescue raid: "Would you also say about Yoni that he returned from Entebbe? Yoni gave his life to save abductees. Benjamin gave the lives of the abductees to save himself." The IDF detained roughly 100 activists of the HaBashan Pioneers settler movement (Israeli military sources put the figure near 70) after they crossed from the Israel-Syria buffer zone onto the Syrian slope of Mount Hermon intending to found a new settlement. Senior IDF officers issued unusually direct criticism of police, prosecutors and courts for failing to impose deterrent penalties on repeat border-crossers, as the group said troops used "severe violence" and confiscated phones despite "complete passivity." HaBashan called settlement the only way to cement Israeli control against what it termed the "slow but consistent erosion" of Israeli position by Syrian armed groups and the local population. Detainees were handed to Israeli police for processing. Haredi protesters opposing Jerusalem light rail construction on Bar-Ilan Street broke into a work compound, tore through fencing, damaged infrastructure and scuffled with construction workers, the latest in weeks of demonstrations against the project. Police arrested one person and declared

a public-disorder incident to clear the site. Transport Minister Miri Regev became the first Israeli official to publicly confirm security cooperation with the UAE during the war with Iran, saying "the Emirates are helping us" against ballistic missile threats, an on-record acknowledgment of previously unconfirmed reports that Israel deployed an Iron Dome battery and personnel to the UAE during the conflict. The IDF and Defense Ministry are drafting a joint NIS 130 billion multi-year plan to buy military aircraft and munitions and build domestic weapons factories, following Netanyahu's December 2025 approval of a NIS 350 billion defense-budget increase meant to build self-reliance against foreign embargoes. The Finance Ministry has stalled the plan for months, arguing the defense budget base for future years remains unresolved despite three months of talks that brought in outside advisers without narrowing the gaps, even as IDF missions expanded across Gaza, Syria and Lebanon, pushing reservist mobilization above 100,000 at its peak. Former hostage Ilana Gritzewsky, held for 10 days after her abduction from Kibbutz Nir Oz and freed after 55 days in captivity, said the terrorist holding her told her she would marry him and bear his children, detailing the abuse weeks after testifying to sexual assault in captivity before the UN Human Rights Council. She said she felt compelled to speak for October 7 victims and survivors of sexual violence who "no longer have a voice."

LEBANON

- Israeli forces detonated an entire block in Bint Jbeil's Doura neighborhood, leveling it days after a soldier was wounded there, part of a broader south Lebanon barrage: airstrikes on Nabatiyeh al-Fawqa and the Ali al-Taher heights, artillery on Qantara, Beraachit and Deir Siriane, demolition operations in Beit Yahoun, Kounine and Tiri, and a raid on an alleged Hezbollah motorcycle cell in the Aqida area (no injuries reported). The Lebanese Army defused four unexploded Israeli bombs across towns in Nabatiyeh and Bint Jbeil districts, and an Israeli drone flew low over Beirut and its southern suburbs. Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Fahmy condemned the Bint Jbeil demolition as a continuation of "barbaric and savage" Israeli conduct, calling the collective-punishment approach a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and urging the international community and UN Security Council to confront Israel's expansionist campaign.
- The framework agreement continues to polarize Lebanon's political class, though most stop short of trying to sink it. Samir Geagea and Sami Gemayel welcomed the deal, alongside President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, both committed to extending state authority nationwide. Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem again declared it "null and void," Speaker Nabih Berri said it "will not pass as it is" while insisting he will not organize a bloc to topple it, and Druze leader Walid Jumblat said he opposes the deal but "will not be part of a coalition to bring it down." FPM leader Jebran Bassil voiced reservations but warned against dismissing it outright, and after meeting Berri said the two agree on rejecting strife and protecting the army as an institution. Washington named General Joseph Clerfield, former head of the Mechanism committee, to chair a new security and military committee overseeing implementation, as a tripartite committee takes shape ahead of the Lebanese Army's deployment into the "pilot zones" to verify the absence of Hezbollah weapons before further Israeli-held territory is handed over, a mission complicating army commander General Rodolphe Haykal, who faces renewed criticism for declining to use force against Hezbollah despite government orders.
- President Aoun, who has accused Hezbollah of being "accustomed to foreign control and tutelage" for obstructing a framework agreement that separates Lebanon's track from Iran's, said he

is "not fond of Israel, but give me another solution, whatever it may be, and I will proceed with it," comparing today's circumstances to the 1983 era and noting "everyone contacted me and endorsed these steps." He warned that "inciting strife or attempting to bring down the government through street action are red lines," and said the framework does not legitimize Israel's occupation but lets the Lebanese Army extend control over all Lebanese territory once Israeli forces withdraw.

- The Joint Lebanese-Syrian High Committee, signed by Prime Minister Salam and Syrian Foreign Minister Assaad al-Shaibani to build ties on sovereignty and non-interference, will cover political, security, economic, energy, infrastructure, health, telecom and digital-transition cooperation. Speaker Berri, who hosted Shaibani for talks he said carried "full solidarity" with Lebanon and no hostility toward Hezbollah, said relations with Syria in the coming phase should be "peer-to-peer," arguing Lebanon has no choice but to engage with Damascus since it cannot cooperate with Israel: "if it refuses to deal with Syria, the Lebanese will be left with no choice but the sea."
- UK Deputy National Security Adviser Dame Barbara Woodward wrapped a two-day visit meeting Speaker Berri, Prime Minister Salam, Deputy PM Tarek Mitri and Army Commander General Haykal, welcoming the framework agreement as "central to advancing... withdrawal of Israeli forces, disarmament of Hezbollah and full deployment" of the Lebanese Army under UNSCR 1701. The US Embassy in Beirut marked July 4 by voicing support for "the people of Lebanon as they forge a brighter future," while Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani and French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot discussed Lebanon's stability in a call following the US-Iran memorandum's signing.
- Updated casualty figures show the ceasefire remains fragile: Lebanon's Health Ministry recorded 25,783 hostilities since March 2 as of July 1, with cumulative casualties reaching 16,494 (4,298 dead, including 253 children and 391 women, and 12,196 injured), concentrated in Nabatiyeh (7,038 casualties) and the South (6,922). UNICEF's May sitrep separately tallied more than 3,400 killed and 10,200 injured that month, with children 9 percent of casualties, while its \$388.5 million humanitarian appeal remains only 49 percent funded. Tens of thousands of displaced people remained in shelters near full capacity through May and June amid recurring displacement warnings and strain on health facilities and first responders in the south. Lebanon's telecom network stayed operational but fragile through June, with damaged infrastructure and restricted maintenance access in the south prompting humanitarian partners to test satellite and eSIM connectivity as a hedge against localized outages.
- France and Italy are preparing to deploy international coalition forces to south Lebanon once UNIFIL's mission ends, at Lebanon's request, in support of the Lebanese Army, and with American backing.
- Israeli media reported the withdrawal from two additional pilot zones remains one to three weeks away, with General Clerfield's coordination team due in Israel this week to plan the handover.
- Israel says the underground networks it has uncovered in south Lebanon, which it attributes to Hezbollah, include tunnel galleries, weapons depots, drone-manufacturing facilities and launch positions, assessing the system was built over decades to withstand airstrikes.
- Kuwait's army opened enlistment to women holding university, diploma or high-school-equivalent credentials, aged 21 to 26, with registration open through July 13 via the Defense Ministry's volunteer portal.
- Hussein Hamza, in the southern village of Kfaroue, has taken in dogs, chickens and livestock abandoned by displaced residents who could not evacuate them during Israeli strikes, some ar-

living wounded.

SYRIA

- Internal Security Forces in Hama province dismantled a seven-member cell in the al-Ghab area, with one detainee confirming involvement in the videotaped assassination of a resident of Salhab. The Interior Ministry is still working to identify additional suspects linked to the cell.
- The White House confirmed President Trump will meet President Ahmed al-Sharaa on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Ankara this week, his second sit-down with Sharaa after hosting him at the White House in November. Separately, Damascus announced that French President Emmanuel Macron will visit Syria, accompanied by a delegation of investors and French corporate representatives for a roundtable on bilateral ties, in what would be the first visit by a Western European head of state since Assad's fall and the third state visit overall, after Ukraine's Zelensky and Qatar's Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.
- Mourners buried victims of Thursday's cafe bombing near Damascus's Palace of Justice in the Midan district, which killed nine and wounded 20 after a planted explosive device detonated at a cafe frequented by lawyers. Authorities have made no arrests and no group has claimed responsibility, though officials vow to find those responsible. Separately, a grenade attack on a checkpoint in the Jaramana suburb wounded three security personnel, the attacker killed when a third grenade detonated in his hand, and a second suspect was arrested.
- A Vienna court is due to rule Monday on two former Syrian officials tried under universal jurisdiction for wartime torture: Khaled Al-Halabi, 63, a former intelligence brigadier general held since 2024 and charged with torture, aggravated coercion and sexual coercion, and Musab Abu Rukbah, 54, a former police lieutenant colonel accused of serious bodily harm and coercion in Raqqa between April 2011 and March 2013. Both deny the charges and face up to 10 years in prison. The case follows similar Assad-era prosecutions in France, Germany, Sweden and Belgium. Halabi is a Druze who fled Raqqa in 2013 just before Daesh's takeover.
- A US court sentenced Antoine Kassis, a cousin of former President Bashar Assad, to 30 years in prison for a transnational narco-terrorism scheme trading Syrian military weapons for cocaine. Prosecutors said Kassis, 59, used his regime connections to arrange the diversion of assault rifles, machine guns and missiles from Syrian military stockpiles to Colombia's ELN starting in April 2024, in a deal worth roughly \$14 million for 500 kilograms of cocaine, with co-conspirators based in Colombia and Mexico.
- Residents of Derbasiyah in northern Hasakah province protested rising fuel prices and deteriorating living conditions.
- The International Chamber of Commerce will cut administrative arbitration fees by 20 percent for cases tied to Syria's post-Assad recovery, mirroring frameworks it adopted for Ukraine and Lebanon, aiming to steer reconstruction-contract and investment disputes toward international arbitration. The reduction covers only ICC's own administrative costs, not the larger expenses of arbitrators, lawyers, experts and translation. Syria's ICC chapter is chaired by businessman Naji Chaoui, with Ahmad Saber Hamsho, son of Assad-era-linked businessman Mohammed Saber Hamsho, as deputy.

PALESTINE

- Israeli forces killed a series of Palestinian children this week: a seven-month-old boy shot dead while sitting on his mother's lap in a car in Hebron's militarized H2 zone, nine-year-old Mohammad al-Halaq shot dead in the village of ar-Rihiya south of Hebron on October 16, 2025, four-month-old Ahmad Marouf Zeid who died after Israeli forces blocked his medical transfer for over an hour at a checkpoint west of Ramallah (Ramallah governor Laila Ghannam called it "a stain on the conscience of humanity"), and 16-year-old Walid Nidal Abu Sunayna shot dead during an army raid on Qalandia refugee camp that also wounded two 14-year-olds and led to three arrests. Unicef UK's chief executive, after visiting West Bank families in Hebron, said at least one Palestinian child has been killed on average every week in the West Bank since January 2025. The West Bank death toll since the Gaza war's start stands at 1,086 Palestinians killed by Israeli soldiers or settlers, against 46 Israelis killed in Palestinian attacks or Israeli operations.
- Patients and wounded Palestinians rallied outside Al-Shifa Medical Complex in Gaza City demanding Israel lift travel restrictions on medical evacuations, with Gaza health authorities citing more than 20,000 patients and wounded awaiting evacuation as Israel continues to throttle crossings through Rafah.
- Israeli forces raided the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound 26 times in June and blocked the call to prayer at Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque on 84 occasions, the Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs said, with 4,212 settlers entering Al-Aqsa through the Mughrabi Gate under police protection and Rabbi Elisha Wolfson of the Yeshivat Har HaBayit repeatedly performing Talmudic rituals inside the compound as "Temple Mount" groups pushed for a "new reality" there. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu separately laid the cornerstone for a Jerusalem "heritage center" at the site of the former Jerusalem International Airport in Qalandiya, part of a package of settlement measures approved on Jerusalem Day (May 17). The Jerusalem Governorate condemned the project as a violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2334, calling it part of a broader effort to reshape the city's geographic and historical identity.
- The Israeli government approved NIS 27 million to fund hotel construction across the West Bank, aiming to convert it from a day-trip destination into an overnight one, with NIS 20 million earmarked for grants covering up to 28 percent of approved investment plans through 2030. Separately, settlers under Israeli army protection broke into and burned down a restaurant serving university students near Al-Zaytouna University south of Nablus after stealing its cash, an estimated \$300,000 loss, while in Sinjil north of Ramallah settlers and their livestock attacked land around Palestinian homes days after authorities seized 464.4 dunams of the town's land, with residents forcing the attackers back.
- The Gaza branch of Palestine's national conservatory, founded in 1993 and destroyed with its instruments and archives during the 2023-2025 Israeli offensive, has reopened in tents on the coast, with musician Ahmed Abu Amsha leading former teachers rebuilding its programs.
- Gaza-related protests against two Democratic congressional candidates, including one that forced California state senator Scott Wiener to leave a San Francisco trans pride march after activists surrounded and berated him over his Israel positions, sparked a broader US debate over protest tactics overshadowing the underlying issue.
- Israel released nine Palestinian detainees held from Gaza through the Kerem Abu Salem crossing, handing them to the International Committee of the Red Cross for transfer to Al-Aqsa Martyrs

Hospital in Deir al-Balah and reunification with their families. The ICRC said it has arranged the release of more than 2,500 detainees this way since 2023 but has been denied access to visit detainees held inside Israel since October 2023, and renewed its demand for information on all those held.

- The UAE delivered a further 416 tonnes of aid to Gaza via four convoys of 47 lorries staged from its Humanitarian Aid Logistics Centre in Al Arish, Egypt, under Operation Gallant Knight 3, distributing more than 160,000 food parcels and at least 40,000 health kits. The campaign, running since October 2023 and including a Gaza field hospital and an Egypt-based floating hospital, added Dh36.7 million (\$9.9 million) last month to its multi-billion-dirham total.
- An Israeli drone strike on Palestinians outside a water distribution station in Gaza City's Al-Samer area killed two people and wounded several others, the latest violation of the ceasefire in effect since October 10, 2025, amid a broader night of Israeli gunfire and shelling across five areas of the strip including Khan Younis and Beit Lahia. Gaza's Health Ministry says Israeli attacks have killed 1,066 people and injured 3,445 since the truce took hold, as Israel has expanded control to roughly 70 percent of Gaza's territory, confining Palestinians to less than 30 percent.
- Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, the 53-year-old director of Kamal Adwan Hospital who led the facility through an 85-day siege before his arrest without charge in December 2024, is in life-threatening condition after more than 555 days in Israeli detention. His lawyer, Nasser Odeh, said a July 2 visit to the underground "Rekefet" interrogation unit at Nitzan Prison found him unable to sit upright, with fresh head injuries and difficulty breathing, telling him "this is the last time you will see me." Physicians for Human Rights Israel says he has been beaten, denied medical treatment, and held in prolonged solitary confinement, and is demanding his transfer and an independent medical exam. His son Elyas, also a doctor, said his father's face was disfigured by torture.

KEY REGIONAL EVENTS

Saudi Arabia

- The March closure of the Strait of Hormuz during the US-Israeli war on Iran halted Gulf fertilizer shipments to Bangladesh just as it entered its mid-March to mid-July planting season, a critical window for rice and jute output. Saudi Arabia's SABIC and the UAE's Fertiglobe stepped in with emergency supply after an emergency tender drew no response, Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation chairman Mohammad Fazlur Rahman said. Bangladesh normally imports 1.55 million tonnes of urea annually, 65 percent from Saudi Arabia and 35 percent from the UAE.

Qatar

- Qatar lifted its week-long suspension of maritime navigation, reversing a June 29 advisory that had halted sailing and fishing (commercial shipping was already exempted), a day after a Qatari national died from shrapnel wounds tied to a vessel that vanished during regional military operations. Iran and Qatar separately resumed direct maritime trade after a roughly five-month halt, restarting shipping between Iran's Dayyer port (repeatedly struck during the war) and Qatar's Al Ruwais port following coordination between Doha and the Iranian embassy.
- Trump intends the Qatari-gifted Boeing 747, which he flew for the first time this past week, to

anchor a planned Miami presidential library modeled on the Reagan library, an ambition facing obstacles including retiring the plane from military status, Democratic opposition, and housing a jumbo jet inside a skyscraper.

UAE

- A Dh1 million (\$270,000) relief fund set up by Burjeel Holdings chairman Dr. Shamsheer Vayalil is compensating families of seven workers (six Indian, one Sri Lankan) killed in a Dubai minibus-lorry crash on Emirates Road last month, with Dh100,000 per family plus additional support for the nine survivors, travel costs, and children's education.
- The UAE's Fursan Al Emarat aerobatic team flew in US skies for the first time, joining the Blue Angels and the UK's Red Arrows among other squadrons in America's 250th-anniversary celebrations, a fly-past framed as a "message of peace, friendship and international co-operation."

Jordan

- Jordan evacuated 21 citizens from earthquake-hit Venezuela aboard a Qatari Emiri Air Force C-17 that had ferried medical and food aid to Caracas under Royal directives. Its 100-member search-and-rescue team and three Royal Medical Services doctors rescued a 3-year-old as the Jordan-Qatar air bridge delivered roughly 52 tonnes of relief supplies, plus 26 more tonnes on a second flight Friday. Venezuela's ambassador to Amman, Omar Vielma Osuna, credited Jordan's "solidarity" and Qatar's support.

Egypt

- President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi inaugurated the "Octagon," a new Strategic Command Headquarters of eight interconnected octagonal buildings in Egypt's New Administrative Capital, calling it "a significant leap" in command, control, and operations management. Defense Minister Ashraf Salem Zaher said the complex relocates the Armed Forces General Command to unify state command systems. Appearing in military uniform for the first time in over a decade, a move read as projecting strength amid the Sudan civil war spillover, Gaza war fallout, and Libyan instability on Egypt's borders, Sisi thanked Trump for the Sharm el-Sheikh Gaza ceasefire and the Iran war-ending agreement and urged their full implementation.
- At the same address, Sisi ruled out "popular normalization" with Israel absent a "just peace" that establishes an independent Palestinian state, declaring "there will be no lasting peace, no true stability, and no popular normalization except with a just peace that ends the occupation, puts an end to injustice and aggression, restores rights to their rightful owners, and provides security for all."

Turkey

- Israeli President Isaac Herzog rebuked Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's remark that "Israel is a burden on the world," calling it antisemitic and countering that "Israel is here to stay, and it is a blessing to the world." Fidan had said Israel "is not only Turkey's problem" but "a burden that humanity can no longer bear."

Iraq

- Iraq's Counter-Terrorism Service reported the death of First Lieutenant Hassan Khudair Zgheir in clashes with Islamic State remnants in Kirkuk province, amid a two-day CTS operation backed by Iraqi warplanes around Altun Kupri, near the Kurdistan Region's Erbil, targeting cells still active in rugged terrain across Kirkuk, Diyala, Salahuddin, and Anbar. CTS chief Lt. Gen. Karim al-Tamimi said the officer "attained the honor of martyrdom defending the homeland."
- A security raid in Sharqat district, Salahuddin province, uncovered roughly 3 billion Iraqi dinars (\$2.3 million) buried at the home of a Baiji refinery employee, along with four luxury vehicles (including a Toyota Hilux and a BMW), in a widening probe tied to suspended Deputy Oil Minister for Refining Affairs Adnan al-Jumaili. The Supreme Judicial Council has previously put total funds seized in the Jumaili case at more than 98 billion dinars, part of a broader government campaign that has produced arrest and summons orders against current and former officials, lawmakers, and employees over public-fund corruption.

Yemen

- Houthi forces killed at least 16 government-aligned troops (Yemeni officials put the toll at 14 to 16, with 22 to 23 wounded) in an assault south of Hodeidah's Hays district, the deadliest clash between the sides in years and the sharpest break yet in a front largely frozen since the 2022 UN-negotiated truce. The Houthis briefly seized positions in Jabal Dabbas late Friday, using snipers before drone and mortar salvos, before a government counterattack retook the sites by dawn Saturday. Cabinet member Walid al-Qudaimi said the troops died "defending their land and dignity," and Yemeni officials claimed more than 50 Houthi fighters were killed in the fighting.
- The Houthi-Saudi standoff, ignited by last week's alleged Saudi attempt to block an Iranian aircraft from landing in Sanaa, escalated further. The Houthi-run foreign ministry warned that the "head of the Saudi regime" should "look toward its oil fields, Aramco, Yanbu, its ports, the stock market, Vision 2030, and other projects," and Houthi tribes in Saada's Kitaf and Al-Buqa districts, on the Saudi border, declared a general mobilization for what they called a "battle of liberation." Yemeni Armed Forces spokesman Brig. Gen. Abdo Majali called the Iranian flight a "blatant violation" of Yemeni sovereignty and UN Security Council resolutions, alleging it carried IRGC personnel and military experts to aid Houthi operations, while the Southern Giants Brigades dismissed Houthi claims of having engaged Saudi-led coalition aircraft as false and argued the movement serves Iran's agenda over Yemen's. Reports of separate anti-Houthi tribal mobilization grew scarcer after activists circulated operational-security guidance warning against publicizing troop movements. Along the Hodeidah-Bab al-Mandab corridor, the two sides remain dug into fortified positions (berms, trenches, and bunkers) on the N2 highway separating Houthi-held al-Butays from government-held al-Haymah.
- A cargo ship came under attack 55 kilometers southwest of Hodeidah near Zuqar Island on Sunday. A skiff approached the bulk carrier and opened fire before onboard security guards returned fire and the attackers withdrew to a larger vessel with its transponder switched off. The ship and crew were unharmed, and no group claimed responsibility. In the incident's wake, merchant vessels transiting the area broadcast defensive AIS messages such as "ARM GUARD ONBOARD" and "CHINESE CREW ONBOARD," a practice common in the Red Sea's contested waters, where Houthi naval forces and Saudi-backed National Resistance Forces both monitor shipping.
- The Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen, with King Abdulaziz University, launched a training initiative for 500 teachers across Aden, Abyan, Hadramout, Al-Mahra, and So-

cotra, part of a broader Saudi reconstruction effort that has now run 287 projects across Yemen's education, health, energy, water, and other sectors.

- Social media complaints about Houthi governance are spreading in Houthi-controlled Yemen, following a viral post by Houthi fighter Abu Mertah Al-Saidi describing hunger and economic hardship that snowballed into a wider public discussion of poverty, inequality, and official indifference. In one example, a former anti-Houthi soldier who had defected to the movement said Houthi traffic police in Sanaa seized his car over unpaid customs even though he had already paid duties to the internationally recognized government at the Shahan crossing with Oman, describing it as "dealing with two countries inside one country."

KEY INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

- NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte enters this week's Ankara summit facing a shifted goalpost from President Trump, who has moved past burden-sharing (already met via a \$1.2 trillion increase in European and Canadian defense spending since 2017, a chart Rutte branded "The Trump Trillion") to a blunter demand: loyalty over money, citing lingering anger that allies refused to join the US-Israel war on Iran without being consulted. "We don't need their money, we don't need anything," Trump said. "I just want loyalty."
- Trump defended earning roughly \$1.2 billion from family cryptocurrency ventures last year, saying "everybody's profiting" from his presidency and that the funds sit in blind trusts he does not direct. Disclosures show the activity nearly tripled his fortune from \$2.3 billion to \$6.5 billion since 2024.
- Venezuela's interim president Delcy Rodriguez vowed the country would see "no social unrest" over public anger at the government's response to the June 24 twin quakes that killed nearly 3,000 and left thousands missing, as international rescue teams wind down 11 days on, shifting from finding survivors to recovering bodies in La Guaira.
- Trump held a nearly 90-minute call with Vladimir Putin offering to help end the Ukraine war ahead of the Ankara NATO summit, with the Kremlin describing the exchange as "businesslike" and reiterating Moscow's insistence on a settlement that accounts for "Russia's fundamental approach." The call came as Russian missile and drone strikes killed at least 10 people and wounded dozens more in Kyiv overnight, partially collapsing an apartment building, while a retaliatory Ukrainian drone strike on energy infrastructure near Sevastopol knocked out power across the Russian-annexed Crimean city.
- The UAE pledged \$30 million in emergency humanitarian aid for civilians in Sudan's Al Obeid, channeled through the UAE Aid Agency under President Sheikh Mohamed's directive, as deteriorating conditions leave civilians and the displaced short of food, water, shelter and health care. In nearby North Kordofan's Bara district, the Sudan Doctors Network says over 200,000 people, including 20,000 children, face acute food and medicine shortages compounded by outbreaks of measles (100+ cases) and cholera (45 cases), with hospitals including Tayba al-Zaatari and Umm Kuraidim now operating without medical supplies.
- Hundreds of firefighters battled a three-day wildfire in central Portugal that has burned 12,000 hectares, with Spain and Italy sending reinforcement crews and aircraft, while authorities in Thessaloniki, Greece's second-largest city, warned residents to stay indoors after a recycling-plant fire released toxic smoke.

- Europe's leaders, who rallied around Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni this week after Trump's attacks on her, are increasingly coordinating as a bloc on defense and trade to offset Trump's preference for negotiating individually. That cohesion faces its next test at the Ankara NATO summit, as European governments calculate that the bloc, squeezed between Washington and Beijing, must consolidate now rather than later to preserve its standing.
- Trump marked the US 250th anniversary with a National Mall speech calling the republic the "crowning achievement of human history," using the platform to renew attacks on domestic political opponents he branded "communists" ahead of November's midterms.
- The firebomb attacks on Greek governing New Democracy party members' homes in Thessaloniki left five people hospitalized, including a parliamentary candidate who suffered burns and her mother, who remains in intensive care. The crude devices, built from camping gas canisters, are consistent with a recurring pattern of low-casualty attacks by shadowy militant groups on Greek political and law-enforcement figures' property.

MARKETS

- OPEC+ ministers from Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria, and Oman agreed July 5 to raise combined output by 188,000 barrels per day starting in August, the fifth consecutive monthly increase. The increase follows a roughly six-million-barrel-per-day production drop across Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait between the first quarter and May amid the Strait of Hormuz disruption, and comes after the June 17 US-Iran memorandum on strait traffic. UBS commodity analyst Giovanni Staunovo assessed actual production remains probably still below OPEC+'s targets. The group holds its next review on August 2.
- Saudi Arabia's Tadawul All Share Index extended its slide amid investor caution over stalled indirect US-Iran talks, closing down 28.01 points (0.26 percent) at 10,798.97 on turnover of SR3.03 billion (\$808 million), with 153 stocks declining against 103 advancing. The parallel Nomu market fell 1.04 percent to 22,689.95 and the MSCI Tadawul Index lost 0.18 percent to 1,436.32. Saudi Fisheries Co. and East Pipes Integrated Co. led decliners, falling 9.99 percent to SR69.85 and 6.48 percent to SR202 respectively. Qatar's index rose 0.3 percent while Kuwait fell 0.3 percent, Oman 0.2 percent, and Bahrain 0.6 percent. Saudi Arabia's non-oil private sector posted its fastest new-business growth in four months in June even as firms reported rising costs and softening export demand, and Egypt's EGX30 gained 1.2 percent on a 19.6 percent year-on-year jump in M2 money supply to EGP15.33 trillion (\$312.35 billion).
- Asian shares and US futures traded mixed and oil prices slipped after the OPEC+ output increase, with Brent crude down 25 cents to \$71.87 a barrel and US benchmark crude off 10 cents to \$68.59, while tech-share selling pulled Tokyo and Seoul lower amid the Strait of Hormuz talks pause during Khamenei's funeral rites. Japan's Nikkei 225 dropped 0.4 percent to 69,468.17, dragged by SoftBank Group (down 3.4 percent) and Tokyo Electron (down 1.4 percent), while South Korea's Kospi fell 0.8 percent to 8,027.12. Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.8 percent to 23,542.97, the Shanghai Composite edged up 0.1 percent to 4,046.71, and Australia's S&P/ASX 200 slipped 0.1 percent to 8,833.20.
- Russia's fuel crisis deepened as Ukrainian forces carried out more than 50 attacks on refineries and energy facilities since March, an escalation Kyiv says is meant to pressure Moscow toward ending the war. President Vladimir Putin dismissed the shortages as "not critical," cast the strikes

as an attempt to distract from Ukrainian battlefield setbacks, and convened officials to manage the crisis while ruling out any halt to the fighting.

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