Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update October 19, 2026 (Cheshvan 7, 5787)



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Israel; Iran Threatens to Turn Israel Into 'Scorched Earth' if Energy Sites Are Hit

■ *Forgotten Lebanon Jews Reemerge in Israel-Hezbollah Negotiations*
■ *Israeli Firm Exploited Online Ads to Spy on Al Jazeera and Palestinian Sites Reuters*
■ *Family of Israeli Scholar Jailed in Russia Remains in the Dark Over Her Fate*
■ *Most Palestinian Minors Jailed in 2025 Held in Solitary, Nearly All Unsentenced*
■ *Former President Barack Obama made a troubling claim about the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948, suggesting that the Jewish people had taken land from those who lived there before them.*

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Standing with Israel!

US Strike Plans for Iran Include the 'Mother of All Bombs,' Washington's Largest Non-Nuclear Weapon, With Pickaxe Mountain Among the Targets; The United States military has drawn up strike plans against Iran that include the GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast Bomb (MOAB), known as the "mother of all bombs" and the largest non-nuclear weapon in the US arsenal, it emerged on Thursday, October 15, 2026. Multiple US officials said the plans call for the MOAB to be used against Iranian energy infrastructure and nuclear sites, including Pickaxe Mountain. One source said the plan's own language has the attack coming "prior to US retrograde in CENTCOM AOR (area of responsibility)," meaning the US might strike Iran and then immediately pull its forces out of the region. Several of US President Donald Trump's advisors said that, despite his statements that he would not take further action against Iran before the US midterm elections, it remains unclear whether he will change his mind before Election Day. Deploying the MOAB would mark a significant escalation in the conflict, though officials familiar with the military planning discussions said questions remain over how effective it would be in achieving Washington's strategic objectives. Several sources said the MOAB likely could not penetrate deep below ground, where Iranian nuclear facilities such as Pickaxe Mountain are believed to sit. "The MOAB is a massive information operation type weapon that is great for huge area clearance but not much else," one source familiar with the planning discussions said. "It is definitely not designed as a deep penetration warhead." That source said the weapon's main tactical advantage in this scenario would be its psychological effect on Iran. Asked about the plan, a White House official said that "President Trump keeps all options on the table to ensure that Iran can never have a nuclear weapon,", and a Pentagon official said the department "plans for a wide range of operational scenarios to execute Presidential and Secretary-level direction and to ensure mission success in any operational environment." *(JPost/VFI News)*

Iran Faces a Growing Insurgency in Its Sistan-Balochistan Region as the IRGC Rushes Reinforcements to Clashes With Baloch Rebels; Iran continues to clash with rebels in its Balochistan region, following several weeks of growing unrest in the Sistan and Balochistan province in the country's southeast. Little is known about the situation because media are not allowed into the area and the regime keeps a tight lid on information. Even so, videos that surfaced in the two weeks before Thursday, October 15, 2026, point to a growing insurgency. In the days before the latest fighting, an Iranian commander and a police officer were killed in clashes. The human rights group Haalvsh said that "both casualties were from Zabol district," identifying them as "Afsaneh Aqila, a female commander of the all-women's Basij unit in Mehrestan County and Mohammad Ali Shahriari, a male police officer." On Thursday, October 1, 2026, videos shared on social media showed smoke billowing from fighting in the area of Zahedan city. A Baloch rights monitor has since documented the arrival of further regime forces and fighting between the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and local rebels, with around 40 additional military vehicles carrying reinforcements dispatched to Taftan County in the southeast of the province on Tuesday, October 13, 2026, as the clashes intensified. Not much is known about the results of the clashes, notably the number of casualties on both sides, and the reinforcement deployment has not been independently verified.

More than a dozen Iranian military and police personnel were killed or wounded in four attacks over a 24-hour period during the week of October 5, 2026, Haalvsh said. Iranian state media also described clashes on Tuesday, October 13, 2026, with the regime, which calls the Baloch rebels "terrorists," saying several militants had been killed in the operation. The IRGC continues to portray itself as able to "dismantle" what it calls "terrorist cells" in the region, announcing a new operation against armed militants in a province witnessing almost daily attacks. *(JPost/VFI News)*

'Do Not Test Us': Netanyahu Tours the New Eastern Border Wall Running From the Yarmouk River to Eilat, With Anti-Drone Capabilities Built In; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday, October 15, 2026, visited the new section of the security barrier being built along Israel's eastern border, which will run from the Yarmouk River at the junction of the Jordanian, Syrian, and Israeli borders in the north all the way to Eilat, Israel's southernmost city. The vast majority of the approximately 400-kilometer wall will cover the Jordanian border. Netanyahu said it would complement the nation's existing security zones in Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza, and that the new eastern wall would have anti-drone defense capabilities, without going into further detail. "There is enormous work here – massive engineering work, massive logistical work, mobilization of the Israel Defense Forces, mobilization of the reserves," Netanyahu said. "All of this power comes to say to Israel's enemies: Do not test us." The wall, he said, represents "maximum defense so that we can protect the citizens of Israel and prevent anyone from even thinking about invading the State of Israel." He was accompanied on the tour by Defense Minister Israel Katz, the head of the Defense Ministry's Borders and Seam Line Administration, Maj.-Gen. (res.) Eran Ofir, 96th Division Commander Brig.-Gen. Oren Simcha, and other commanders. Katz told the press during the visit that while the border wall is a critical aspect of Israel's security and defense plans, it comes second to having "an active, pro-active, offensive policy led by the prime minister, the State of Israel, and the IDF, facing distant Iran and close threats alike." Later in the day, Netanyahu announced that he would hold a security meeting on the evening of Thursday, October 15, 2026, with IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Eyal Zamir, Shin Bet Director David Zini, and Mossad head Roman Gofman. The Border Police already provides ground-level protection across all of Israel's borders, alongside the IDF presence in the heavily reinforced security zones on the Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria frontiers. *(JPost/VFI News)*

Herzog to Asia's Leaders in Baku: 'Peace Cannot Exist With Terror, and Cooperation Cannot Thrive With Boycotts'; Israeli President Isaac Herzog on Thursday, October 15, 2026, addressed the plenary session of the Seventh Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Baku, Azerbaijan, a forum dedicated to strengthening cooperation among the nations of Asia. "We come together at a time in which the rifts in our global community of nations are seemingly broadening, only to be further aggravated by eroding faith in multilateral forums," Herzog began. "Against this tide of cynicism, CICA stands as an oasis of cooperation and partnership. Israel was always here, from the beginning, at the initiative of the late Shimon Peres back in the 1990s, and we are very proud of it." Herzog praised the host nation as "truly synonymous with impressive regional partnership, tolerance, and confidence building measures," saying that under President Ilham Aliyev's leadership Azerbaijan "has become a paragon of stability, enjoying incredible economic growth and forging ties with nations across the region." "In Israel, we have learned from lived experience that declarations of friendship, in and of themselves, are never enough," he added. "The relationships that endure are those that foster real connections, support practical collaboration, and identify areas of shared common interest. That is the promise of CICA." Pointing to the Abraham Accords, with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates present, Herzog said the agreements "demonstrate how converging interests can transform political realities," and that relationships "that just a few years ago seemed impossible to imagine are now a living, breathing reality." He said Israel has much to contribute to Asia from technology and water management to agriculture, energy, healthcare, and AI, and that it "desires and strives to enhance collaboration and to broaden the circle of peace." "But it must be clear: peace cannot exist with

terror, and cooperation cannot thrive with boycotts," Herzog stressed. "Members of this institution have the right to live freely and peacefully, without their existence being constantly threatened." *(INN/VFI News)*

Online Anti-Semitism Hits a Record High Three Years After October 7, With No Major Platform Back to Its Pre-War Level; Online anti-Semitism has reached record levels three years after Hamas's October 7, 2023, attacks on Israel, with none of the major social media platforms monitored returning to their prewar baselines, a new study by an Australian research institute published on Thursday, October 15, 2026, has found. The Online Hate Prevention Institute (OHPI) found that July – September 2026 recorded the highest levels of anti-Semitic content in any three-month period since it began monitoring social media in 2022. The findings challenge claims that rising anti-Semitism figures are largely attributable to the misclassification of legitimate criticism of Israel. OHPI's analysis drew on more than 29,500 items of anti-Semitic content collected across 11 platforms: Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, Reddit, Telegram, Gab, BitChute and, for the first time, Threads. Each item was reviewed and classified by expert analysts. The institute used a consistent monitoring methodology, measuring the number of anti-Semitic items identified per eight hours of monitoring to track changes over time, allowing researchers to compare levels and types of antisemitism before and after October 7. Although the monitoring was conducted in Australia, the material analyzed originated around the world, reflecting international trends. Antisemitism surged immediately after the October 7 onslaught and never returned to previous levels. While Facebook, X, Gab, Telegram, Reddit and BitChute have remained persistently elevated, antisemitism on Instagram, TikTok and YouTube has continued to rise beyond the initial post-attack spike. Traditional anti-Semitic tropes, including conspiracy theories about Jewish power and influence, blood libels and accusations of collective Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus, remain the dominant category on most platforms a finding the institute says contradicts the claim that the rise is largely explained by criticism of Israel being wrongly labeled anti-Semitic. *(TOI/VFI News)*

ADL: Wikipedia Left 91% of a Banned Editor's Biased Edits on Israel, Hamas, and Zionism Pages Intact Despite Sanctions; Uncorrected biased edits remain embedded across Wikipedia's most-read pages on Israel, Zionism, Hamas, and Jewish history, a follow-up investigation by the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) Center for Technology and Society found on Thursday, October 15, 2026. The new study, titled Damage Done: Wikipedia Leaves Biased Edits Unchecked Despite Editor Bans, follows an initial investigation released in March 2025, Editing for Hate, which documented a coordinated campaign by approximately 30 bad-faith editors to manipulate entries related to Israel, Jewish history, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That initial investigation drew extensive external pressure, including a US House Committee on Oversight investigation, a bipartisan congressional letter signed by 23 members, and federal inquiries from the Department of Justice and the Senate Commerce Committee, alongside widespread media coverage and scrutiny from Wikipedia's own neutral-point-of-view editors. To gauge how editor behavior and article content have changed, researchers analyzed platform activity using five separate data collections gathered between July and August 2026 tracking whether edits made by banned users remain live on major pages, comparing editing volumes before and after the 2025 findings, and reviewing thousands of revisions and discussion logs across conflict-related entries. Following the scrutiny, visible coordination among the bad-faith editors dropped sharply: public user-talk page messaging between group members fell 95.41 percent, from 501 to 23, same-page tandem editing dropped 87.91 percent, from 6,218 to 752, and the group's total combined edits decreased by 26.65 percent, from 182,440 to 133,817. Yet although Wikipedia's Arbitration Committee topic-banned six editors and site-banned three, it did not systematically review or correct any of their work. On six flagship articles, including Hamas, Gaza war, Zionism, and October 7 attacks, 91 percent of past edits made by Iskandar323, an editor identified in the original 2025 investigation who was subsequently site-banned for violating platform rules in the topic area, remain intact in the live text. *(JPost/VFI News)*

Israel Leads Europe's Advanced Economies in the IMF's 2026 Growth Forecast at 4.5%, Ahead of Malta and Denmark; Israel ranks first in projected economic growth for 2026 among advanced European economies in the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) World Economic Outlook for October 2026. Israel's economy is expected to expand by 4.5% in 2026, the highest growth rate among the economies in the IMF's Advanced Europe category. Malta follows with projected growth of 4.2%, while Denmark ranks third at 3.7%. The figures show that the Advanced Europe group as a whole is expected to grow by just 1.3% in 2026, while the euro area is projected to expand by 1.1%. The IMF estimates that Israel's economy grew by 3.5% in 2025 and forecasts further growth of 4.4% in 2027. The fund also projects that inflation in Israel will average 1.8% in 2026 and 2.0% in 2027, while unemployment is expected to stand at 3.1% and 3.2%, respectively. Globally, the IMF forecasts economic growth of 3.1% in 2026 and 3.4% in 2027. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich welcomed the forecast, calling it "a badge of honor for Israel's economy and the citizens of Israel. Even in the face of complex challenges, we have proven that the Israeli economy is strong, dynamic, and leads the developed world." Smotrich attributed the figures to the economic policies pursued by his ministry. "This historic figure, alongside the low deficit and international confidence reflected in foreign investments, is no coincidence - these are the result of responsible, measured, and determined economic policy," he said, adding that the ministry would continue to lead the economy toward growth and ensure a strong economic future for the State of Israel. *(INN/VFI News)*

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