

DAILY BRIEFING

The Dispatch

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MAIN STORY: US AND IRAN SIGN A DEAL TO END THE WAR AND RE-OPEN THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ

- **The signing and the mediator.** Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian put their names to a 14-point memorandum of understanding ending the war the US and Israel launched on February 28, the document taking immediate effect. Trump signed a physical copy Wednesday while dining with French President Emmanuel Macron at Versailles on the sidelines of the G7, Pezeshkian signed electronically overnight, and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif endorsed what he branded the “Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding” as mediator, the role Islamabad has held since brokering the April 8 ceasefire and hosting the first direct US-Iran talks on April 12 and 13. A formal ceremony had been set for Friday in Switzerland, but its fate is now uncertain, and the text stayed secret for days before both governments released it.
- **What the 14 points contain.** The memorandum declares an immediate and permanent end to military operations on all fronts, naming Lebanon explicitly, and commits both states to respect each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Iran reopens the Strait of Hormuz, which carries roughly a fifth of the world’s oil and gas, and in return the US lifts its naval blockade, waives oil sanctions so Tehran can sell crude freely, and undertakes to work toward terminating all US and UN sanctions. The text earmarks at least \$300 billion for Iran’s reconstruction (with Washington not required to contribute) and commits Iran only to “downblending” its stockpile of highly enriched uranium under International Atomic Energy Agency supervision.
- **The nuclear core is deferred, not settled.** The deal starts a 60-day clock, extendable by mutual consent, to negotiate the future of Iran’s nuclear program, the stated reason Trump gave for going to war. It fixes no enrichment limit and does not bar the steps toward a weapon, binding Iran only to “never produce” one, a pledge Tehran had already made under the 2015 accord that itself took some 18 months to negotiate. Iran’s foreign ministry ruled its ballistic missiles out of any future talks (“Iranian missiles are only for firing, not for negotiations”), and Trump warned he would “bomb the hell” out of Iran if no final agreement emerges.
- **Two sides reading the same text in opposite directions.** Tehran cast the document as a victory, with Pezeshkian calling it historic and the work of a powerful Iran and chief negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf saying it “acknowledges the failure of the United States” even as he warned that Iran’s “finger is on the trigger” and threatened to return to “the language of power” if Washington reneged. The agreement’s vague, “performance-based” language leaves the two governments disagreeing over what it actually commits them to, and its clause ending the war in Lebanon is already a fault line, promising a halt that Israel says it will not honor.

- **A strategic defeat dressed as a settlement.** More than 100 days of US and Israeli bombing, which killed thousands (many of them civilians) across Iran and Lebanon, ended in a strategic defeat for Washington and, by extension, Israel. The Tehran government, target of a joint campaign meant to cripple or destroy it, emerged intact and empowered rather than broken, its blockade of Hormuz having forced Washington into a string of concessions. Both governments are now selling the outcome at home as a win, and neither has fully convinced its public.
- **The “spin job” backlash.** US coverage was scathing and near-unanimous, judging that the agreement met none of Washington’s prewar objectives while handing Tehran enormous financial concessions, with even outlets sympathetic to Trump concluding he “got played.” Trump dismissed his critics as “jealous, dishonest or stupid,” insisting oil was flowing, prices falling, and the stock market at a record. Vessel tracking, though, recorded no ships transiting Hormuz, undercutting his claim that traffic had already resumed.

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

The memorandum stops the shooting and reopens Hormuz but settles none of the questions the war was fought over, making it a 60-day truce dressed as a peace rather than a durable end to the conflict. On the face of the text Iran is the clear winner, trading a reversible uranium “down-blending” pledge for sanctions relief, free oil sales, a reconstruction fund, and a surviving regime, while Washington has shelved its prewar goal of dismantling the nuclear program. The two deepest hazards are the Lebanon clause, which orders an end to a war Israel refuses to stop, and a nuclear deadline no prior negotiation has beaten in two months. The decisive near-term tell is whether the Friday Switzerland session convenes and produces a working agenda, or whether its collapse, alongside continued Israeli operations, exposes the document as a pause both sides are already reinterpreting. Watch the first verified tanker transit and the opening nuclear round as the early proof of whether the deal holds.

IRAN

- Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei approved the memorandum despite holding a “different view,” saying he deferred to President Masoud Pezeshkian’s commitment and insisting the coming negotiations will not mean surrendering to American demands. Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, tasked with driving implementation, warned that any breach, bad faith, or “excessive” demands from Washington would draw a “crushing response,” adding that the enemy “received a slap during the war, and if they choose this path again, they will receive a harsher slap.” The Supreme National Security Council secretariat declared “complete lack of trust” in Washington, said any US violation would be met with countermeasures under pre-prepared plans, and tied continued action to “retribution for the blood of the martyred commander.” Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said Iran will not honor its commitments unilaterally and will reciprocate any US delay, will pursue documented violations through every legal and diplomatic mechanism, and drew a categorical red line against moving its enriched-uranium stockpile out of the country, though diluting enrichment levels remains negotiable.
- Trump signalled openness to Iran retaining the right to enrich uranium for civilian purposes, a marked shift in Washington’s stance ahead of the next-phase talks, arguing it is “a little hard when

other people have it, other adjoining states have it and you're not letting them have it for purposes of electricity." On enrichment the emerging text appears to echo, not exceed, the 2015 JCPOA. Vice President JD Vance simultaneously maintained that Washington will not allow Iranian enrichment, exposing a gap in the administration's line going into the talks on the nuclear program's future. Before the war Iran's stockpile sat a short technical step from weapons-grade per the IAEA, and US and Israeli strikes hit several key nuclear sites again during the latest fighting.

- Iran moved to convert its wartime closure of the Strait of Hormuz into lasting leverage over the world's most strategic shipping route. Ghalibaf asserted Iran's sovereign rights as a coastal state, said the strait "will not return to what it was before," and confirmed Iran will charge vessels a "payment for services" (not tolls), a fee Washington has repeatedly rejected and one the memorandum formally recognizes. The Supreme National Security Council said a Strait of Hormuz Authority will fast-track transit permits and oversee mine-clearing, with ships bound to the route and timing it sets and traffic resuming only gradually, while state television added that passage still requires coordination with the IRGC Navy, pointing to the outline of a registration framework that would let Tehran police who transits. The English and Persian texts of the memorandum diverge on exactly this: the Persian version says traffic will track pre-war volumes "as determined by the Islamic Republic of Iran" and that Tehran will set the strait's future administration in talks with Oman, where the English text uses softer, consultative language. Europe is assembling a possible French- and British-led naval mission to protect commercial shipping and clear mines, with Germany dispatching two warships toward the Red Sea as a preliminary step but conditioning participation on seeing the deal's full terms, Iranian and Omani consent, and a Bundestag mandate, a scramble sharpened by Washington's May decision to withdraw some air and naval support from European allies.
- Iranian singer Parastoo Ahmadi and eight members of her production team were sentenced to 74 lashes each, plus two-year bans on travel and on artistic work, over a 2024 concert she livestreamed performing without a hijab. The Qom criminal court convicted them of offending public decency through "vulgar and immoral content." The case stems from a viral December 2024 performance of the patriotic anthem "From the Blood of the Youth of the Homeland," after which she was briefly detained and later prosecuted, and fits a broader pattern of punishing artists who publicly defy the hijab rules.
- UN special rapporteurs Alice Edwards and Mai Sato demanded Iran release Lindsay and Craig Foreman, a British couple sentenced to 10 years on spying charges after a trial the experts said was marked by grave irregularities and failed basic fairness guarantees. Detained in January 2025 while transiting Iran, the couple deny any wrongdoing and are now on hunger strike in Tehran's Evin prison, refusing food after their phone contact with family was cut, which the rapporteurs called a medical emergency at 30 days without food. The experts warned the two are being held for political leverage and pressed Tehran to quash the convictions.

ISRAEL

C O R E G R O U P

- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to hold the "security belt" in southern Lebanon and not withdraw, insisting Israel is not bound by the US-Iran memorandum even though the document commits to Lebanon's territorial integrity. The military published a map of its declared security zone, running roughly 10 kilometers inside Lebanese territory, and stated troops would stay to "remove threats" both inside and beyond that line. A senior official close to Netanyahu described

"stubborn negotiations" with Washington to keep forces deployed south of the Litani and said Israel would not back down, while a second official conceded the outcome hinges on whether President Trump forces the issue by threatening penalties for non-compliance. The army formally delivered three non-negotiable priorities to political leaders: freedom to strike throughout Lebanon, retention of the active buffer zone, and full demilitarization of the south. On the ground, commanders and soldiers reported open-fire rules tightened to removing identified threats only, leaving them exposed and unable to read their own mission, with one account summarizing the mood as "no one understands what is happening." Trump and Netanyahu clashed over the campaign, Trump objecting to strikes that risked unraveling the ceasefire, pressing for restraint, and demanding a "complete ceasefire on all fronts, including Lebanon," a call Vice President JD Vance echoed by warning Israel against "going wild in Lebanon." Defense officials privately assessed the emerging accord as a strategic loss, one senior figure calling Iran "the big winner" and Israel "the loser," and Israeli army radio signaled the withdrawal itself would be on the table when the Lebanese and Israeli delegations meet in Washington next week.

- Vance issued an extraordinary rebuke to Netanyahu's cabinet ministers who attacked the Iran deal and Trump personally, telling them to "wake up and smell the reality" and calling Trump "the only head of state in the entire world who is sympathetic to" Israel and its sole remaining powerful ally. He pointedly noted that two-thirds of the defensive weapons protecting Israel over the past three months were American-built and paid for by US taxpayers. Netanyahu, who avoided publicly criticizing the accord, pressed to preserve the relationship with Washington. Trump said the US "did send a copy" of the accord to Israel, countering reports of a snub, and reaffirmed his criticism that Israel "could do a much better job" in Lebanon. Israeli defense circles read the memorandum as a capitulation that converts the war into a strategic defeat.
- Israel's ultra-Orthodox community erupted in revolt over the arrest of draft evaders, with yeshiva students blocking roads, breaking into police stations, and staging increasingly violent demonstrations after police began detaining evaders in line with a court ruling. Roughly 80,000 Haredi men aged 18 to 24 are eligible for service but have not enlisted, even as the IDF faces a manpower shortage. Haredi coalition parties are holding Netanyahu's legislative agenda hostage, and the prime minister is reported to be weighing a halt to the detentions. The Knesset advanced a measure to dissolve itself in a 110-0 vote, an almost total collapse of resistance that exposed the coalition's fragility, and haredi protests forced a partial suspension of Jerusalem's light rail.
- Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar severed all contact with EU foreign-policy chief Kaja Kallas after reports she compared Israel to apartheid-era South Africa during a May visit to Mexico, branding the remark a "blood libel" and demanding a retraction. Kallas did not address the allegation directly, responding that "dialogue is the foundation of diplomacy" and affirming the EU's commitment to ties, while the EU ambassador to Israel stated it is not official EU policy to call Israel an apartheid state. The freeze lands as Kallas pushes to ban imports of West Bank settlement products by July, and echoes Israel's 2023 boycott of her predecessor Josep Borrell.
- Israel Police and the Defense Ministry's economic counter-terrorism unit confiscated property tied to drone smuggling into Gaza since the start of the year, the first use of this enforcement type in the drone field. Defense Minister Israel Katz imposed the economic sanctions on intelligence grounds even though the vehicle owners were not caught in the act, casting the measure as an attack on the financial and logistical infrastructure behind smuggling networks. Katz warned that anyone who smuggles weapons, equipment, or funds to Gaza armed groups "is part of the terrorist network itself and will pay a heavy price."
- Israel's military censor blocked or altered more than 5,700 news reports in 2025, an average

of 15 a day and the second-highest annual total in the 15 years of available records. The unit, embedded in the Military Intelligence Directorate, demanded redactions in 4,974 items and barred 753 outright, far above the 2011-2023 average of about 2,300 redactions and 320 bans, with censorship most intensive during the war with Iran.

- A UN report on children and armed conflict named Israel as responsible for the highest number of verified grave violations against children in the occupied Palestinian territories in 2025, documenting 12,445 violations linked to Israel and the territories, including 5,452 in the occupied West Bank. The findings came as global grave violations against children rose 34 percent to a record 38,558, the highest since the mandate was established.
- Israeli forces staged an overnight incursion into the village of Al-Asbah in Syria's southern Quneitra province, sending in nine military vehicles shortly after midnight to raid several homes before withdrawing, with no casualties or arrests reported. Damascus casts the raid as another breach of the 1974 disengagement agreement governing the buffer zone with the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

LEBANON

- The Israeli military pressed a multi-front ground operation across south Lebanon despite the ceasefire understanding, concentrating in the Nabatieh basin north of the Litani and around the strategic Ali al-Taher ridge, which Israeli forces tried for four days to seize without success. One Israeli soldier, reserve Master Sergeant Alexander Filin (29), was killed and seven others wounded, including the deputy commander of the 36th Division, when an explosive device struck a command team moving on foot. A booby-trapped drone then detonated over an evacuation vehicle, wounding another soldier, and the army said it was investigating whether the blast came from an Israeli device or one planted by hostile forces. Hezbollah, fighting openly, said it ambushed two Israeli forces advancing toward the northern side of Ali al-Taher and from Arnoun toward the outskirts of Kfar Tibnit, destroying three Merkava tanks with guided missiles and sustaining the clashes with rocket salvos and mortars. Israeli aircraft intercepted several rockets fired at troops with no casualties, and Hezbollah fire forced an Israeli reconnaissance helicopter near Ali al-Taher to withdraw. Israeli drones and artillery struck Toul, Kafr Rumman, the Abu Rashid heights in the West Bekaa, and a car near Kfar Tibnit that killed two civilians, with another person killed in Zabadin, raising the toll since the understanding to eight. The army published a map placing its forces about 10km inside Lebanese land and maritime territory along its declared "Yellow Line."
- Hezbollah's leadership struck a defiant posture. Mohammad Raad, head of its parliamentary bloc, declared that Israel's war "aimed at crushing the resistance" had failed and would not achieve its objectives, and pressed the Lebanese state to adopt a framework for indirect negotiations only, insisting Israel must halt hostilities on land, at sea, and in the air and begin withdrawal within 60 days "without any need whatsoever for direct negotiations." Secretary-General Naim Qassem said the group had thwarted what he called the "Greater Israel" project, ruled out any disarmament as an unacceptable "Israeli prescription," set mutual security as the only basis for talks, and urged internal Lebanese dialogue away from external dictates or direct negotiation.
- The humanitarian toll deepened. The Health Ministry's latest cumulative count put the dead at 3,912 and the wounded at 11,873 since the March escalation, with women and children making up

roughly a fifth of casualties and 190 documented attacks on the health sector killing 128 people. Displacement exceeded 1.049 million, more than 130,000 of them sheltering in 632 overcrowded collective centers, and conditions for large-scale return remain absent. UNICEF counted 247 children killed and 992 wounded, an average of 12 children killed or maimed each day since March 2, with over 770,000 in acute distress. Some residents began cautious returns to the south, including to Tyre, where many found their homes reduced to rubble after pre-evacuation airstrikes. The Civil Defense headquarters in Nabatieh, clearly marked, lay destroyed by a May 23 strike, with local officials calling the city's devastation worse than the 2024 war. Jordan dispatched an eighth aid convoy of 19 trucks of relief supplies and medicines, routed through Syrian territory in coordination with Lebanon's High Relief Commission.

- Lebanese authorities arrested a businessman suspected of importing components for Hezbollah drone motors, acting on a French judicial request tied to a procurement network dismantled in France. The man admitted bringing in three maritime shipments of electrical equipment folded into his company's imports and passing them to a contact he believed belonged to Hezbollah, while denying knowledge of their military use. The case bears on Hezbollah's fiber-optic drones, jamming-resistant and tethered by cable up to 50km, which the group has manufactured in Lebanon and fielded against Israel since early March.
- The General Directorate of State Security warned publicly that an infiltration-and-recruitment campaign is targeting Lebanese through WhatsApp and social media.
- The US Treasury imposed fresh sanctions on three individuals and five entities tied to Hezbollah, accusing the targets of using their influence to obstruct Lebanon's peace process and delay the group's disarmament. The most prominent name was Marada Movement leader Sleiman Frangieh, accused of leveraging his alliance with Hezbollah and accepting its financial backing to contest seats held by reformist and independent MPs in the parliamentary elections. Also designated were Mahmoud Qmati, deputy head of Hezbollah's political council, accused of coordinating cash smuggling from Iran, and businessman Wael Constantine, alongside front companies linked to the financial network of Alaa Hassan Hmayye, whose March designation was widened to capture intermediaries in Syria, Iraq, and Oman. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Hezbollah must disarm for Lebanon to secure a safe and prosperous future, while the State Department called the group the single biggest obstacle to the country's recovery.
- President Joseph Aoun chaired a preparatory meeting for the coming Washington-mediated negotiations, joined by the army commander, Ambassador Karam, and members of the military and diplomatic delegations, as Beirut readied for three rounds of talks set for June 23 to 25. The first session is to seat both delegations, the second the military team alone, and the third the diplomatic team. Aoun, committed to the direct track, reviewed and amended the letter-of-intent paper before handing it to the US mediator, with officials signaling it needed substantial reworking. The opening session slipped from June 22 to 23 at Israel's request, and Lebanon intends to resume from the withdrawal item if Israel first honors a comprehensive ceasefire. A joint Qatari, French, and British ministerial delegation visited Speaker Berri at Ain al-Tineh.
- In a CNN interview, Lebanese minister Nassar rejected any foreign interference in Lebanon and called for confining all arms to the state.
- Hezbollah has operated two discreet channels to the Trump administration, not one, both activated to track the Tehran-Washington talks and the process opening Friday. One channel runs through Qatar, where the group's head of international relations Ammar Moussaoui traveled to follow the negotiations, and the second operates in Tehran. Samir Geagea disputed any direct line, characterizing the exchanges as routine diplomatic contact between the US ambassador and

Speaker Berri rather than a Hezbollah channel.

- Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Mitri said Lebanon had received clear and repeated assurances from Syria that it will not interfere in Lebanese affairs, rejecting the notion that Damascus might be enlisted to confront Hezbollah. The assurances followed Trump's suggestion that Israel let Syria "take care of Hezbollah," a proposal President Ahmed al-Sharaa had already dismissed as unfounded, saying Damascus prefers to help end the Lebanon conflict rather than be drawn into it. Mitri framed Lebanese-Syrian ties as entering a new phase built on mutual respect for sovereignty and shared interests.
- Addressing the joint Qatari, French, and British ministerial delegation, President Aoun argued that Lebanon needs investment rather than financial aid, casting the diaspora as central to reconstruction and putting the onus on the state to enact confidence-restoring reforms. He tied Lebanon's stability to that of the wider region and Europe, while thanking the visiting governments for backing the army and security forces.
- Ogero, the state telecom operator, announced a general and comprehensive strike on Tuesday that will halt its work across the country.

SYRIA

- Syria's detention-accountability file resurfaced on two fronts. The arrest of activist and filmmaker Hassan Akkad, following a lawsuit filed against him, drew sharp criticism from Syrian journalists, activists, and rights defenders who cast it as a test of the new government's posture on detainees and free expression. Separately, the Syrian Network for Human Rights pressed Damascus and Baghdad to legally resolve the case of 4,743 Syrians the SDF transferred to Iraq since 2019, demanding a central national registry of the transferred, official channels with the Iraqi government for updated name lists, individual judicial reviews of cases built on torture-extracted or unverifiable confessions, and suspension of death sentences pending independent review. It placed the file inside Syria's transitional-justice track, arguing that counterterrorism and prosecuting Daesh crimes neither justify mass transfers nor override non-refoulement guarantees.
- A Syrian military delegation led by Maj. Gen. Salim Idris of the Defense Ministry visited Istanbul's National Defense University on Thursday, holding talks with its president, Erhan Afyoncu, and senior Turkish officers on expanding cooperation in training, professional development, and military education. The visit extends a rapid deepening of defense ties since Assad's fall in late 2024: Syrian troops drilled alongside NATO members in Turkiye last month in their first such exercise post-Assad, and Damascus under President Ahmed al-Sharaa joined the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh as its 90th member in November while rebuilding security and diplomatic links with Turkiye and the EU.
- Aleppo governorate convened the presidential-decree committee tasked with rehabilitating war-damaged areas, returning the displaced, and closing the camps file on June 18, advancing the "Syria Without Camps" project slated to begin by year's end. Emergency and Disaster Management Minister Raed al-Saleh disclosed a plan to renovate 60,000 homes for camp residents, a figure he said could rise, backed by \$1.8 billion approved for the works, with reconstruction priority for the families of those killed set in coordination with the Defense Ministry. Aleppo governor Azzam al-Gharib said selection would follow need assessed through resident surveys, that the government would cover transport out of the camps, and that families formed in the camps or left

without homes could receive multi-year rent allowances.

PALESTINE

- Palestinians killed by Israeli fire in Gaza since the October 2025 ceasefire passed 1,000, reaching 1,008, with 3,165 wounded and 784 bodies recovered. The latest deaths came in an Israeli drone strike on a civilian car on Omar al-Mokhtar road in the Al-Rimal neighborhood west of Gaza City, killing three near the Abu Khadra Mosque. A separate strike in Khan Younis killed two and wounded six near the beach at the Muwasi tent camp, where hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians shelter, and the military named the target a militant. The enclave has seen near-daily strikes, shelling, and gunfire along the line dividing it into Israeli- and Palestinian-controlled zones, and Israel says the operations thwart imminent attacks and that four of its soldiers have been killed in the period. Cumulative deaths since October 2023 stand at 73,018, with 173,273 wounded.
- The Union of Gaza Strip Municipalities warned that water, sewage, and waste-management services are near collapse, raising the risk of a health and environmental catastrophe. Israeli restrictions on industrial oils, diesel, spare parts, pumps, and tires are the cause, with industrial-oil shortages the gravest threat because generators, water wells, sewage stations, and municipal machinery depend on them directly. Municipalities run dozens of wells supplying over 140,000 cubic meters of water daily, pump roughly 60,000 cubic meters of sewage into the sea to prevent overflow into residential areas, and collect more than 3,000 cubic meters of waste a day, all of which could halt and leave waste accumulating amid shelters. UN aid chief Tom Fletcher told the Security Council the ceasefire is failing, with nearly a million people lacking adequate shelter and children waking to rats biting their faces, and described Gaza as “held together by humanitarian workarounds and Palestinian perseverance.”
- Israel’s High Court of Justice ordered the state to justify holding Gaza detainees for weeks before bringing them before a judge, giving it until July 19 to respond. The conditional order, from a three-justice panel led by Supreme Court President Isaac Amit, targets the wartime amendments to the 2002 Incarceration of Unlawful Combatants Law, which the Knesset expanded after October 7 to let security authorities hold those it designates unlawful combatants for prolonged periods without indictment or routine judicial oversight. The petition was brought in February 2024 by five rights organizations, including the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel and Adalah.
- Israeli settlement expansion and military restrictions have displaced 50 Palestinian Bedouin and herding communities across the occupied West Bank since late 2023, with roughly 300 violations against these communities recorded in April 2025 alone, per a survey by the Independent Commission for Human Rights and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Near Hebron, authorities issued demolition notices for nine Palestinian homes in Ash-Shuyukh, a town inside Area A where the Palestinian Authority nominally holds full control yet Israel’s Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories retains the final say on construction. The same week, Israel began excavation for a new settlement called Doren near Hebron and seized planning powers over the Ibrahim Mosque, overriding a 1990s agreement with the Palestinian Authority.
- Palestinian prisoner and political activist Lama Khater, detained after a raid on her Hebron home on 23 March 2026 and held at the Al-Moskobiya interrogation centre in Jerusalem, detailed systematic abuse of female detainees in Israeli custody. Through her lawyer, she described beatings, strip searches, solitary confinement, and humiliation, alleging that on arrival she was strip-

searched and severely beaten, then thrown into a dark, cold cell where guards forcibly removed her hijab, confiscated her prescription glasses, and poured water on her mattress.

KEY REGIONAL EVENTS

Qatar

- Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian thanked Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani for Doha's mediation in the agreement that ended the war. Qatar's foreign ministry called the accord a "solid foundation for advancing to the next stage of negotiations between the American and Iranian parties," pointing to technical talks set for Switzerland on Friday.

Saudi Arabia

- Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, speaking in Vienna, called the US-Iran memorandum "incredibly important" and voiced cautious optimism that both capitals genuinely intend to give diplomacy a chance, while warning that the accord's durability hinges on a robust long-term verification regime and on settling freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. Riyadh's economy absorbed the war's shock with limited damage: tourism spending hit a record SR304 billion (\$80 billion) across roughly 123 million visitors in 2025, and strong Ramadan and Hajj turnout cushioned a "quite tough four months," holding the five-month decline to about 5 to 6 percent against a fast recovery led by domestic travel.

UAE

- A Cabinet resolution set the minimum age for social media use at 15, giving platforms a 12-month window to detect and disable under-15 accounts or face being blocked. The rules apply to tourists as well as citizens and residents, making the UAE the first Arab state to join the wave of bans led by Australia, Britain, and Canada.

Jordan

- The IMF Executive Board approved \$188 million in fresh financing for Jordan, completing the fifth review of its Extended Fund Facility (about \$134 million) and the second review under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (about \$54 million). The disbursement backs Amman's effort to hold macroeconomic stability and cut public debt as the regional war strains its economy.

Egypt

- Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty took a call from Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam and declared full Egyptian solidarity with Beirut, calling Israel's complete withdrawal from all Lebanese territory a necessity and any violation of Lebanese sovereignty a flagrant breach of international law and UN Security Council Resolution 1701. He pressed for support to Lebanese state institutions, the army above all, and for the state's exclusive monopoly on arms as the foundation of Lebanon's stability.

KEY INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

- Trump referred the memorandum to Congress under the required legal procedures, opening a 60-day clock, and senior administration officials briefed House and Senate leadership, including Majority Leader John Thune, Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, and the foreign-relations committee chairs. The pledge of a fund of at least \$300 billion for Iran's reconstruction became Washington's central flashpoint. Senate Armed Services Committee chairman Roger Wicker warned the memorandum concedes the gains of Operation Epic Fury and said the fund would make Obama's 2015 nuclear deal "look like a pittance." Several Democrats and a handful of Republicans, plus conservative influencers, seized on the price tag with midterm elections five months out and affordability dominating the politics. Trump ruled out direct US funding in a Truth Social post, writing "There is no 300 Billion Dollar payment to Iran" and casting the fund as private investment contingent on Iranian compliance. He separately said the US holds frozen Iranian money it will have to return, reasoning that withholding it would deter investment in the dollar. Trump cast Vice President JD Vance, who helped negotiate the accord and has become its chief public defender through interviews and a promotional video, as the figure most likely to absorb blame if it fails. Vance was set to lead the next round of talks in Switzerland, but the White House postponed his departure, citing difficult logistics.
- At the G7 summit at a French Alpine resort, Trump abandoned his usual hostility to multilateral gatherings, declaring he had found "a great deal of unity" a year after walking out of the Canada summit early. The seven leaders agreed a final communique that, unlike last year, addressed Ukraine, committing to tighten sanctions on Russia's war economy including its fossil-fuel revenues and to expand air-defense supplies to Kyiv. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz called the statement a success, and Emmanuel Macron hailed a "very deep change in the US approach" toward Ukraine. Macron then threw open Louis XIV's palace at Versailles for a private reception and dinner marking America's 250th anniversary, a calculated soft-power play to hold a personal channel to Trump open across their differences on Iran, Ukraine, and tariffs. The gambit kept Trump from leaving early, and it was over that dinner, at a venue that hosted the 1919 treaty ending the First World War, that he signed the memorandum on the summit's final day.
- Ukraine launched one of its largest drone assaults since Russia's invasion, striking the Moscow Oil Refinery for the second time in a week and setting it ablaze, with black smoke over the capital's southern skyline, at least 17 wounded, and flights halted at four Moscow airports. The Gazprom facility supplies more than a third of the capital's petroleum needs, making the strike part of Kyiv's campaign to cut the revenue funding the war. Russia's Defense Ministry claimed it downed 555 drones overnight, roughly 200 near Moscow, and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov vowed a "massive" retaliation. The attack landed as Putin hosted Southeast Asian leaders at a Russia-ASEAN summit in Kazan, a fresh embarrassment after drones reached his hometown of St. Petersburg earlier this month. Zelensky called it an "absolutely justified response" to recent deadly strikes on Kyiv and said he had held a coordinating call with Trump and Macron on the summit's sidelines to press Moscow toward negotiations. Separately, the European Union quietly opened tentative diplomatic contacts with Moscow to avoid being sidelined in any future peace talks, a move that drew criticism from member states not told in advance.
- The UN's two food agencies warned that acute hunger will deepen across 13 global hotspots between June and November, with some 266 million people already in high acute food insecurity and conflict the principal driver. Lebanon and Madagascar were newly added to the list, joining

Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen, and Gaza as the gravest concerns, with Nigeria and Somalia also escalated. In a parallel appeal, the FAO and WFP sought \$202 million to shield 8.8 million people across 22 countries from a strengthening El Niño that forecasters give a 63 percent chance of turning very strong in the second half of 2026, threatening drought, floods, and storms.

- Senators moved to freeze Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's office travel funds until the Pentagon delivers overdue reports, chief among them its unredacted investigation into the February 28 strike on the Minab elementary school in Iran on the war's opening day, which killed more than 165 people, many of them children. Officials have preliminarily attributed the strike to the US and blamed outdated intelligence, but Congress has yet to receive the report, believed completed last month. The provision, in this year's defense authorization bill, was framed by Senate Armed Services Committee ranking Democrat Jack Reed as forcing greater Pentagon accountability.
- The United Kingdom, Norway, and a coalition of at least 29 countries warned the UN Human Rights Council that Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) could imminently escalate their assault on El-Obeid, the North Kordofan capital, putting roughly 500,000 civilians, including more than 100,000 displaced people, at risk of large-scale atrocities. The coalition pressed all states to apply maximum pressure on the RSF and the rival Sudanese Armed Forces to protect civilians and allow humanitarian access.

MARKETS

- Crude and fuel prices fell to multi-month lows after the strait reopened under the deal. Brent dropped roughly 2 to 3 percent Thursday to near \$77 to \$78 a barrel, its lowest since the opening days of the war in late February, while US West Texas Intermediate slid to about \$74 to \$75, the lowest since early March. US benchmark crude had touched about \$80 on Monday, against \$67 before the war and a wartime peak above \$120, a 15 percent decline on the month. Pump prices followed, the US national average for regular gasoline dipping just below \$4 a gallon (\$3.999) for the first time since March, though still about \$1 above pre-war levels and roughly 25 percent higher than a year ago, with state spreads running from \$3.58 in South Carolina to \$5.64 in California. Transit volumes confirmed the restart: 12.5 million barrels crossed Hormuz in a single overnight stretch, the highest since the war began February 28, with at least 10 commercial ships moving, three Saudi-flagged supertankers carrying 6 million barrels, three or more Iranian-flagged tankers carrying roughly 5 million barrels (another 2 million approaching), and six verified transits logged on June 17. Iraq's oil ministry said its southern fields are ready to resume, with state marketer SOMO nominating tankers for contracted cargoes and a gradual ramp keyed to Hormuz flow. Analysts expect the reopening to release some 93 million barrels of stranded non-Iranian crude from the Gulf and to depress Middle East prices, tempered by weak refining margins and Asian refiners having already locked in June-to-August supply. IEA chief Fatih Birol said several countries are reviewing their energy policies now that Hormuz has shown it can be closed and reopened.
- Gulf producers and Europe moved to diversify away from Hormuz after the closure exposed the cost of a single chokepoint, which stranded a fifth of the world's oil and LNG and forced the shutdown of around 11 million barrels per day of production plus refineries and LNG plants, leaving exporters treating alternative routes for oil, chemicals, and fertilizer as a strategic imperative. PIF Governor Yasir Al-Rumayyan, at the FII Priority Europe summit in Rome, said the kingdom's east-to-west pipeline (built after the 1980s blockade threat) served as a lifeline for global energy markets during the shutdown, and argued renewables and nuclear add to rather than replace fossil fuels.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen pressed G7 leaders on the India-Middle-East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) as a more resilient export route, though only a handful of the EU's 27 members are formal signatories. The World Economic Forum's 16th Energy Transition Index found global progress has flatlined and transitional readiness fell for the first time in over a decade, with MENA down 0.9 percent, while Saudi Arabia was the regional standout, its score up 1.5 percent to 57.4 as renewables investment rose from \$6.6 billion in 2024 to \$11.9 billion in 2025 under its Vision 2030 target of 50 percent renewable electricity.

- World equities were mixed after the deal. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 climbed 1.7 percent to a record close of 71,053.49, its first finish above 70,000, and South Korea's benchmark also set a record, while Wall Street had retreated the prior day on Fed rate-hike speculation, with S&P 500 and Dow futures pointing higher again. European bourses diverged, Germany's DAX up 0.2 percent against a lower CAC 40 in Paris and FTSE 100 in London (the FTSE off 0.8 percent). The Bank of England held its main rate at 3.75 percent after May inflation steadied at 2.8 percent, above its 2 percent target, with Governor Andrew Bailey calling the oil decline "encouraging" but signaling further UK rate rises remain possible. The easing in energy prices has not stopped central banks from tightening: the ECB and Bank of Japan have already raised, and the Fed and BoE have signaled hikes, with policymakers warning that energy-market normalization could run well into next year and that inflation-fighting credibility is at stake after five years of above-target prices.

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