

DAILY BRIEFING

The Dispatch

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MAIN STORY: US AND IRAN OPEN IMPLEMENTATION TALKS IN SWITZERLAND

- Qatar and Pakistan, the mediators, announced encouraging progress in a joint statement at 3:07am Monday after the first round of negotiations to implement the Islamabad Memorandum opened Sunday at the Qatari-owned Bürgenstock resort above Lake Lucerne and ran through the night, the second US-Iran meeting since the war began on 28 February. US Vice President JD Vance led the American side, with Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff already on the ground for the technical work. Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi led Iran's delegation, joined by the deputy oil minister and the central bank governor, a lineup that signaled Tehran's focus on sanctions terms. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and armed-forces chief Field Marshal Asim Munir attended alongside the Qatari mediators. The statement set a roadmap to a final deal within 60 days, established a high-level oversight committee, and opened a direct communications line to prevent incidents in the Strait of Hormuz.
- Donald Trump destabilized the opening from Washington. In a televised interview he said the US could seize control of the Strait of Hormuz if it had to and take 20 percent of the oil passing through, warned that an Iranian closure would "wipe out their country," and floated US transit fees absent a deal. On Truth Social he ruled out tolls during the 60-day ceasefire but reserved the right to impose them afterward "for services rendered as the Guardian Angel to the countries of the Middle East," and demanded Iran stop its well-funded proxies in Lebanon from "causing trouble" or face strikes "just like last week, only harder." He added that he had warned the Iranians by phone not to close Hormuz or "you will not have a country." Tehran lodged a formal protest and the delegation refused to rejoin the four-party session, the threats having halted the talks and thrown their continuation into doubt. Ghalibaf answered from Switzerland that Washington "should be careful in their statements" and that Iran's armed forces were ready, while a parliamentary security spokesman dismissed the threats as expired, noting the US "wanted to but could not" take Hormuz during the war. The Qatari and Pakistani mediators exchanged messages to contain the rupture and bring both sides back to the table.
- Iran reimposed its blockade of the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday, its central Khatam al-Anbiya military command citing a US "breach of contract" and "the Zionist regime's continuous and relentless violation of the ceasefire in southern Lebanon." A negotiator-linked source set two conditions for reopening, an end to the Lebanon ceasefire violations and the issuance of waivers permitting Iranian oil sales, casting the energy chokepoint as Tehran's principal point of pressure in the talks. US Central Command rejected the claim outright, a spokesman stating "Iran does not control the Strait of Hormuz" and that American forces remained present and vigilant, and vessels continued

to transit the passage.

- The memorandum's sequencing became the core dispute. Its first paragraph requires a ceasefire on all fronts including Lebanon, and Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei argued that under Paragraph 13 the move to final-deal talks is conditional on first implementing Paragraphs 1, 4, 5, 10, and 11, so without an end to the fighting in Lebanon there is no entry into the final phase. Friday's planned session had already been postponed after Israel struck Lebanon following the deaths of four of its soldiers, and Israeli troops clashed with Hezbollah again on Saturday, each side accusing the other of breaking the truce. Araghchi nonetheless claimed major progress by Monday, citing a de-confliction cell with Lebanon as the agreement's "first real test," along with waived oil and petrochemical exports, a lifted blockade, some released frozen assets, and a launched reconstruction plan for Iran.
- President Masoud Pezeshkian said the \$6 billion in Iranian assets frozen in Qatar would be unfrozen and returned to Tehran with the start of negotiations, and Trump acknowledged Washington would have to give the money back. Paragraphs 10 and 11 of the memorandum cover Iranian oil exports and the release of frozen assets, the agenda items that drove Tehran to seat its oil and central-bank principals. Pezeshkian held a firm line on the nuclear file, insisting Iran "will never give up" its right to enrich uranium and that the other side would be forced to accept it, while maintaining Iran has no intention of building a weapon.
- Vance cast the talks as a presidential mandate to "open a new page" with Iran, said Washington wanted assurance that Tehran acquires no nuclear weapon and a broader transformation of the Middle East, and declared himself confident the ceasefire could hold. He added Lebanon to an agenda first built around reopening Hormuz, lifting oil sanctions, and unfreezing assets. The two presidents had signed the initial accord on 18 June before this implementation round. Summit security spilled into civil aviation, a last-minute no-fly zone over B rgerstock triggering a radar fault that canceled 26 flights and delayed more than 60 at Zurich on Sunday before being resolved.

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

The roadmap and the de-confliction cell matter less than the fact that both sides walked back from Sunday's rupture and kept negotiating, which signals that Tehran and Washington each value the deal's survival above the points they are publicly litigating. Iran's Hormuz closure and Trump's toll threats are bargaining instruments calibrated to extract movement on the two items that actually bind the process, Lebanon's ceasefire and sanctions relief, not preparations for renewed war. The structural weakness is that the party doing the fighting in Lebanon, Israel, sits outside the room and has committed to staying in the south, so the de-confliction cell will be tested by events neither negotiator fully controls. The nearest observable is whether that cell produces a measurable drop in south-Lebanon clashes within days, since sustained quiet would unlock the move toward final-deal talks while another Israeli-Hezbollah exchange would let Tehran reinvoke Paragraph 13 and stall. The actual transfer of the \$6 billion from Qatar is the cleanest near-term sign the money track is moving rather than being promised.

IRAN

- Four months after a US Tomahawk cruise missile struck a girls' elementary school in the Iranian town of Minab on the first day of the war, killing at least 175 people, most of them children, the Pentagon has produced no account of why it fired into the school, one of the deadliest US civilian bombings in decades. Critics assess the inquiry will either never conclude or be sealed under classification to keep the worst errors from the public. The case has become a test of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's "warfighting" doctrine, which he cast two weeks after the strike as rules of engagement "designed to unleash American power, not shackle it." Trump first attributed the strike to Iran, then claimed Iran also fielded the same cruise missiles (it does not), and now moves to write it off as a mistake, dismissing the question of accountability as strange so long after the event.

ISRAEL

- Defense Minister Israel Katz declared the army will not withdraw from the "security zone" it holds in south Lebanon, stating there is "no restriction" on Israeli forces operating there against Hezbollah fighters and infrastructure. Netanyahu backed him, vowing to keep troops in place "for as long as necessary" to shield northern communities. The declaration cuts against reporting that the Trump administration may soon press Israel to pull out of south Lebanon as part of the US-Iran ceasefire understanding, a demand Netanyahu has privately cast as a red line. He has signaled Israel might accept only a small withdrawal if Washington insists, and not fall back past the Yellow Line. The army, wary the US-Iran track will curb its freedom to hit Hezbollah, is pushing for intensified Israel-Lebanon talks, the next round set for Washington on Tuesday.
- Protests across several Israeli cities Saturday demanded Netanyahu's removal, with about 1,000 rallying at Tel Aviv's Habima Square and police near his Jerusalem residence again confiscating demonstrators' sound equipment. Carmit Palty Katzir, a relative of October 7 hostages, accused Netanyahu of prolonging the war for his own "political survival." The Trump administration, judging the Netanyahu government could fall, has opened informal contacts with opposition leaders Naftali Bennett (Together) and Gadi Eisenkot (Yashar), citing concern over coalition hardliners and a desire to build a base before elections. A poll put the opposition bloc ahead of Netanyahu's for a Knesset majority.
- A Hebrew University and Agam Institute poll of 3,644 Israelis (June 17 to 20) found 92.1 percent believe Iran won or gained more from the war and its deal with Washington, including 93.1 percent of Netanyahu's own right-wing base, while 82.9 percent judged Israel's long-term security weakened. Opposition to the US-Iran agreement ran to 63.2 percent against 12.1 percent in support, 72.5 percent rejected Netanyahu's claims about what the campaign achieved, and his approval slid from 40.5 percent in March to 29.4 percent in June. Former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said Israel could have rejected the agreement and can still tell Trump "no," calling the war a "terrible failure" that left Iran's nuclear and ballistic-missile programs and its regime intact. Addressing the JNS International Policy Summit, Netanyahu pledged Iran will never obtain a nuclear weapon while he holds office, claimed Israel destroyed Iran's nuclear infrastructure and killed 20 of its top nuclear scientists, and defended the troop presence in security zones in Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza. Coalition leaders are meanwhile pressing him to dissolve the Knesset within the week to

head off divisive Haredi conscription-exemption legislation, a move that would force early elections.

- The Shin Bet said it foiled dozens of planned attacks in the West Bank over the past year directed from Turkish soil by Hamas's "West Bank Headquarters," a unit tasked with advancing operations into the territory and Israel. It named Istanbul-based senior Hamas official Zaher Jabarin as head of the group's West Bank activity and Ayman Abu Khalil as its military-wing chief there, accusing the network of recruiting operatives and moving weapons and funds into the West Bank.
- Residents of northern Israel say the Lebanon ceasefire will freeze the front and leave them unable to return home. Metula mayor David Azoulay said Netanyahu is caught in a "bear hug that is slowly suffocating" Israelis over the memorandum with Iran. The Galilee Panhandle, wedged between the Lebanese and Syrian borders, held some 50,000 Israeli Jews before three years of Hezbollah rocket fire hollowed out its towns, and Metula has stood evacuated since October 2023. Trump spent the week publicly criticizing Netanyahu and what he called Israel's "vicious" approach to Lebanon, deepening the strain over a war whose northern front derailed the opening round of US-Iran talks.

LEBANON

- The Israeli army ran a multi-front ground operation across south Lebanon before fighting paused, advancing toward the Litani River and assaulting Hezbollah's underground network. The 7th Armored Brigade breached routes to the Litani under anti-tank, drone, and IED fire, destroying tunnel complexes Hezbollah built over two decades. At Tebnit, troops cornered roughly 30 Hezbollah fighters inside a tunnel system over a kilometer long, one of the group's most important southern headquarters, the fighters resisting by mortar and drone. The central battle was for the Ali Taher ridge north of the Litani, which overlooks Beaufort castle, Nabatieh, Iqlim al-Touffah, and Jabal Rihane and which Israel calls Hezbollah's southern command center and the suspected site of the prized Imad 4 tunnel. An Israeli force took the ridge and seized a major command post, engineers beginning a weeks-long dismantling with an estimated 230 Hezbollah members still inside awaiting surrender, while Hezbollah denied the position had fallen and reinforced the area by summoning Saraya al-Muqawama auxiliaries, some of Sunni background. Diplomats advised Beirut to have Hezbollah hand the Ali Taher and Beaufort tunnels to the Lebanese army before Israel destroys them. The army also revealed a tunnel under Majdal Zoun, casting the finds as proof Hezbollah embedded military infrastructure inside civilian towns. Five Israeli soldiers were killed and 13 wounded in two incidents within two days, the campaign's heaviest IDF losses: the 52nd Battalion commander Lt.-Col. Dor Gedalia Ben-Simhon, the fourth officer to command that battalion since October 2023, died when a tank was struck near Tebnit, and Sgt. First Class Nir Ben-Ari was killed when Hezbollah fired more than 50 projectiles overnight, bringing the IDF toll to 36 soldiers and one civilian contractor since March 2. Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir visited Ben-Simhon's family, called the ceasefire fragile, and ordered forces to stay ready to resume combat. Two Lebanese army soldiers were also killed in separate Israeli strikes, one on the Kfarrumman-Nabatieh road and one dying of June 19 wounds from a strike on Toulina. Saturday's strikes hit about 20 locations across the south and Bekaa and killed at least 30, with 16 dead in Nabatieh, against a cumulative offensive toll of more than 3,980 killed and over a million displaced since March 2.
- Calm held across south Lebanon for the first time since the 110-day war began, after fighting

paused Saturday evening. From roughly 1600 Saturday into Sunday no airstrikes, shelling, or notable violations were recorded, only high-altitude drones over some towns. Displaced residents trickled back to Nabatieh, Tyre, and Bint Jbeil to inspect damaged homes and shops, with movement returning to Tyre's seafront and markets, though many stayed away pending proof the truce would hold after earlier ones collapsed. The Lebanese army urged residents to delay returning to border villages, citing the danger of renewed Israeli attacks, and returnees described Nabatieh as disaster-stricken.

- Marine conservationist Mona Khalil, 76, founder of the Orange House sea turtle sanctuary in Mansouri near Tyre, died Friday at the American University of Beirut Medical Center of wounds from an Israeli strike that hit her home on June 4. Her assistant, burned in the same strike, is recovering. The IDF said Khalil was not a target and that it had no record of a strike injuring her, while acknowledging it conducted strikes around her village after issuing evacuation warnings.
- The central bank (Banque du Liban) condemned a direct and deliberate Israeli strike on its branch in Nabatieh, calling it an attack on an official building inseparable from Lebanese state institutions. The branch was empty at the time, and Governor Karim Souhaid contacted authorities including President Joseph Aoun and filed a formal complaint seeking an investigation. The bank called on the United States and allied states to guarantee the protection of Lebanese civilians and official institutions.
- Israeli strikes near the Tyre Necropolis, a UNESCO World Heritage site, damaged the monument, and other ancient sites across Tyre, a city with a 5,000-year history, remain at risk as enforcement of the shaky ceasefire falls short.
- Trump threatened to strike Iran "very hard again, only harder" if it does not stop Hezbollah, which he called Iran's highly paid proxies in Lebanon, from causing trouble, and said he is disappointed Israel cannot put Hezbollah away without knocking buildings down. He said he is close to handing Syria's Ahmed al-Sharaa a larger role against Hezbollah, an opening Sharaa publicly declined. Hezbollah condemned the Lebanese government's direct, US-brokered negotiations with Israel as executing a US dictate and surrendering sovereignty, and Secretary-General Naim Qassem insisted Israel cannot remain in Lebanon, rejecting any ceasefire that grants Israel freedom of action.
- Vance named Lebanon one of the two priorities of the Iran talks alongside the nuclear file, saying conditions are improving and the fighting slowing, that Rubio's team is actively managing the file, and that Trump is committed to a "full regional ceasefire." Washington is preparing to send an envoy to the region, prioritizing Israel and possibly stopping in Lebanon, to push toward an officially announced Lebanon-Israel agreement at the next session. Rubio assured President Aoun that the Lebanese file is decoupled from the Iranian file irreversibly and reaffirmed US backing for Lebanese sovereignty, conditioned on an Israeli withdrawal and Hezbollah's disarmament, a step Beirut argues its army lacks the means to enforce on the ground.
- UK Development Minister Baroness Jenny Chapman concluded her first visit to Lebanon, a two-day trip, announcing a new GBP13m humanitarian package for protection, education, healthcare, and food that raises total UK support since March to GBP43m. Traveling jointly with her French and Qatari counterparts, she met President Aoun, Speaker Nabih Berri, and Social Affairs Minister Haneen Sayed, welcomed the direct Israel-Lebanon talks, and urged de-escalation.

SYRIA

- Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa denied that Damascus seeks any military role against Hezbollah in Lebanon, responding to Trump's floated idea of handing Syria the task after Israel failed to eliminate the group. In an Al-Mashhad interview he said Syria wants "economic lines between Lebanon and Syria, not military lines," and laid out an integrated proposal built on halting the war first, then reviving the Damascus-Beirut economic artery and opening political and social tracks, paired with security measures meant to ease Syrian, Lebanese, and Israeli concerns. He framed Lebanon as a development file sliding into a purely security one amid political deadlock, wide destruction, and large internal displacement, and warned that any state hosting an armed force beyond its control cannot build or develop. Sharaa said he would sit with Hezbollah "if it serves Syria and Lebanon," despite an unhealed Syrian wound the group shares in, and insisted the goal is to secure Lebanon's Shiite community rather than gamble with it, since losing any component is a loss for the whole region. He added that Trump's remarks were misread and reflected irritation at the Lebanese impasse.
- Syrian security forces captured Akram Saleh al-Hamad, an ISIS explosives specialist who built IEDs and landmines for the group in the east, in a joint Interior Ministry and General Intelligence operation, seizing explosive belts, detonators, and bomb-making materials. Al-Hamad was tied to a motorcycle bombing in Al-Bukamal, a strike on a Syrian Arab Army vehicle, and a device meant to kill an Internal Security Forces member. The arrest came as ISIS claimed a sticky-bomb attack in the Daff al-Shawk district south of Damascus that severed a leg of Salah Ahmad al-Saleh, head of the Babila courthouse administration, its first confirmed strike on a judicial official and a sign of sleeper cells still active around the capital.
- Syrian authorities arrested retired Brigadier General Abdul Ghaffar al-Hussein over abuses under Bashar Assad, accusing him of detaining hundreds of residents and running a security checkpoint in Daraa while commanding the 66th Regiment, of roles in forced disappearances, and, after his 2015 retirement, of corruption and embezzlement of public funds. The Interior Ministry separately detained three others accused of crimes against residents of Deir Ezzor under the former regime, part of a widening campaign against remnants of the deposed government.
- 10,516 Kurds across 2,892 families have applied for Syrian citizenship since May under al-Sharaa's January decree restoring nationality to Kurds and recognizing their language and the Nowruz holiday, with the first interview lists issued in Hasakah and Raqqqa. The drive advances Damascus's integration of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces and targets a stateless population the 1962 census left at an estimated 200,000 to 360,000.
- Syria reframed World Refugee Day around return rather than exodus, citing hundreds of thousands of refugees coming back from neighboring states and large numbers of internally displaced returning home, which has ranked the country among the leading destinations for returnees. Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani said Damascus will keep representing and defending the rights of Syrians still abroad as part of national reconstruction.
- Syria deepened economic ties with Germany around reconstruction, energy, and infrastructure, taking part in the Arab-German Economic Forum in Berlin on June 18, where the Berlin-based Arab-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry named Syria the partner country for the forum's next edition.

PALESTINE

- Gaza's Health Ministry counted 9 Palestinians killed and 41 wounded over 24 hours, with more bodies still trapped under rubble and in streets that ambulance and civil defense crews cannot reach. An overnight strike on an apartment building in Gaza City's Sabra neighborhood killed four of the Al Safadi family and wounded twelve, a strike near Dream Hall west of Khan Younis killed Akram Abu Madi, 31, and a girl, Julia al-Balaawi, and Israeli forces shot dead a woman in Beit Lahia in the north, all outside the zones where Israeli forces are deployed under the ceasefire. Since the truce took hold, Israeli fire has killed 1,021 Palestinians and wounded 3,249, against a Gaza government media office tally of 3,338 ceasefire violations.
- An Israeli air strike on a house in the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza killed Ahmed Wishah, 25, a cameraman for Al Jazeera Mubasher, along with two other Palestinians, raising to 12 the number of Al Jazeera staff killed in Gaza since October 2023. His brother Mohammed, also an Al Jazeera Mubasher correspondent, was killed in an Israeli strike on his car in April. The IDF designated Wishah a sniper operative in Hamas's military wing who had advanced attack plans against Israeli troops, and said the same wave of strikes killed Hussein Qadra and Mohammed Farra, operatives it tied to a network that funneled more than half a billion shekels to Hamas, plus Zaki Abu Mustafa, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Khan Younis Brigade elite-forces commander accused of rebuilding the group and of taking part in the October 7 abduction of 12-year-old Yagil Yaakov. Al Jazeera rejected the designation and demanded that international legal institutions prosecute and punish the Israeli officials responsible for killing its staff.
- Israeli forces detained seven Palestinians in predawn raids across the Ramallah governorate, taking five men from Dura al-Qare' north of Ramallah and others from the Al-Tireh neighborhood and the Al-Amari refugee camp in Al-Bireh after storming their homes. In the south, Israeli troops killed two Palestinians, one of them a child, in Beit Ummar north of Hebron, the army saying its Unit 636 ambushed and fired on three men it accused of throwing firebombs near the Karmeit settlement. Settler attacks escalated under army protection across the Nablus and Ramallah areas, with armed settlers assaulting Turmus Ayya, Sinjil, Jalud, Burin, and Burqa, where a 33-year-old man was beaten and hospitalized, and settlers shot a 15-year-old in the foot with live fire in Beit Ummar.
- An Israeli settlement plan in the Jordan Valley near Jericho would wall off Palestinian towns and sever the territorial contiguity a future Palestinian state would need, deepening Israeli control of the area.
- Israel's year-long effort to arm anti-Hamas militias inside Gaza has produced little against the group despite the militias' public boasts of progress. The largest, The People's Army under Ashraf al-Mansi, posted footage of an operative flying a military-grade drone, the first public sign the gangs may be receiving heavier weapons than the rifles Israel has supplied. Ghassan Dehini, who leads another faction, functions as the network's unofficial overall leader. Over the past year Israel has given the groups weapons, air support, intelligence, food, and medical evacuation of wounded fighters into Israel, a year after Netanyahu first publicly acknowledged the arming program, and analysts judge the militias have had almost no operational impact on Hamas's grip.
- The UAE's Gallant Knight 3 operation moved 786 tons of food parcels and shelter supplies into Gaza this week across five convoys totaling 64 trucks routed through Egypt's Arish, up from 544 tons the prior week. Jordan's Hashemite Charity Organisation distributed food parcels to

displaced families at the Al Khudair camp east of Gaza City in response to an urgent appeal as conditions deteriorate.

KEY REGIONAL EVENTS

Saudi Arabia

- Saudi Arabia's Operating Revenue Index rose 10.6 percent year-on-year in April, led by mining and quarrying (up 22.5 percent), manufacturing (up 10.3 percent), and financial and insurance activity (up 14.2 percent), adding to the evidence of non-oil resilience as Riyadh presses its Vision 2030 diversification agenda. The index slipped 3.8 percent month-on-month.

UAE

- Dubai's tourism sector is positioned to rebound as travel restrictions ease in the wake of the US-Iran memorandum to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, with British interest surging after London's Foreign Office dropped its advisory against all but essential travel to the UAE and Canberra ended its do-not-travel recommendation. The reversals follow the late-February US-Israeli war with Iran, which drew attacks on Gulf states, halted some airline operations, and made tourist insurance hard to obtain. Washington still holds the UAE at a level 3 reconsider-travel advisory, and Ottawa and Paris maintain their own warnings.

Qatar

- An explosion and fire tore through the Barzan gas facility in the Ras Laffan industrial area as workers tried to restart export operations, the plant Qatar had idled after Iran's chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz cut shipments off from clients. The Interior Ministry first called it an internal blast from a technical accident with several injuries and no dangerous leak, then hours later put the toll at 54 hurt and 18 missing, with search-and-rescue teams still working. Barzan can supply almost 1.4 billion standard cubic feet of gas per day, feeding Qatar's domestic power generation and the desalination plants that supply its water, and the disruption to one of the world's top gas producers threatens further strain on energy markets.

Oman

- Oman's trade surplus held at 1.54 billion Omani rials (\$4.01 billion) in the first quarter of 2026 as imports fell faster than declining oil and gas exports.

Jordan

- Jordan executed six men at dawn convicted of killing 10 law-enforcement officers across two terrorism cases and three drug operations, announced by spokesman Mohammad Momani. Two belonged to the Salt Terror Cell, whose August 2018 bombing near the Fuheis Festival west of Amman killed two gendarmes and triggered a follow-on raid in which four more security personnel died, and another was put to death for the 2022 killing of a senior officer.
- Jordan's Northern Military Zone arrested five men who tried to cross illegally from Syrian territory

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at dawn Sunday, applying rules of engagement before handing them to the authorities. The army has foiled 231 infiltration and smuggling attempts since the start of 2026 and seized roughly 11 million Captagon pills along with weapons and other narcotics.

Egypt

- Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held a trilateral with Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan and Turkey's Hakan Fidan on the sidelines of a four-party meeting in Cairo that also drew US presidential adviser Massad Boulos, pledging continued coordination on regional crises spanning Gaza, the Iran file, Sudan, Libya, and the Horn of Africa.

Turkey

- President Erdogan ordered officials to resume talks on reopening the Halki Orthodox seminary near Istanbul, shut by the state in 1971 and a cause Trump pressed in their Washington talks ahead of his expected visit to Ankara next month for a NATO summit. Founded in 1844, Halki was the Ecumenical Patriarchate's main theological school and trained the current patriarch Bartholomew. A senior cleric said the matter had entered a new phase, though renovation work and a legal and educational framework remain to be settled.

KEY INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

- The UN Security Council and more than twenty states warned of a mounting large-scale atrocity risk in Sudan and pressed the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to halt their assault on El-Obeid, capital of North Kordofan, after ten days of RSF drone strikes there. The warning centered on roughly 500,000 civilians at risk, and the Council called for accountability under the May 2023 Jeddah Declaration as the war between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF, ongoing since April 2023, threatens to deepen the humanitarian crisis.
- German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said securing Bundestag authorization before the summer recess for a German military role in the Strait of Hormuz is desirable but not assured, calling the question "completely open." He set a durable US-Iran ceasefire as the precondition for any deployment and said the legal framework already exists, resting on freedom of navigation as an enforceable right under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- Britain has recorded a rising wave of violent attacks on dissidents and critics carried out on behalf of foreign states, with Iran the most active. MI5 state-threat investigations rose 48 percent in a year, and more than twenty Iran-linked threat-to-life cases have opened since 2022, among them the March 2024 stabbing of Pouria Zeraati, a London-based journalist covering Iran, knifed three times in the leg outside his home. Russia and China feature in the same pattern, the former tied to May 2025 arson at properties connected to Keir Starmer and the latter to a "shadow policing" operation against Hong Kong activists that drew two convictions this week.
- Trump escalated a public rift with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, tying it to Rome's refusal to back the US military campaign against Iran and to let US forces use its "landing strips or runways" during the conflict. He said Meloni now sought to repair ties "after the United States defeated Iran militarily" and charged that NATO allies stay "absent" when tested despite decades of US spending on the alliance. The quarrel began when Trump claimed Meloni had "begged" him

for a photograph at the G7 summit in France, a charge she called “completely invented,” which prompted Italy’s foreign minister to cancel a planned US trip.

- The foreign ministers of Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, meeting in Cairo for the fourth consultative session of their R4 grouping, jointly welcomed the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding between the US and Iran and pressed for full implementation of its commitments. Hosted by Egypt’s Badr Abdelatty and received by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Hakan Fidan, Faisal bin Farhan, and Ishaq Dar cast the memorandum as a constructive step toward de-escalation and toward ending a conflict that had threatened regional security, energy markets, maritime routes, and global supply chains. They reaffirmed support for Palestinian statehood as a precondition for durable regional stability.
- South Korean President Lee Jae-myung said he told Trump at the G7 that sanctions on North Korea have become “ineffective,” citing deepening Moscow-Pyongyang military cooperation born of the Ukraine war. The exchange fed expectations that Washington, having brokered the Middle East de-escalation, will turn next to North Korea, a pivot Trump signaled by posting an uncaptioned image of his 2018 Singapore meeting with Kim Jong-un.
- A regional realignment is taking shape around Lebanon’s post-war orientation, with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Pakistan, alongside Damascus, working to press Israeli withdrawal from occupied zones and anchor Beirut away from a return to Iranian domination. Lebanese Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Mitri carried that effort to Ankara on June 17, where Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yilmaz received him. The contest runs against Iran’s drive to keep the Lebanese file inside its two-month nuclear talks with Washington. Trump’s suggestion that the file be left to Damascus has drawn comparison to 1976, when Syrian forces entered Lebanon’s civil war, sharpening the question of whether Lebanon settles under a Turkish-led Arab axis or slips back toward Tehran.
- Belgium declined to enforce the International Criminal Court’s arrest warrant against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, framing the refusal as a defense of state sovereignty and Israel’s right to self-defense and a rejection of the genocide characterization underpinning the case.

MARKETS

- Vessel transits through the Strait of Hormuz collapsed on Sunday, with five ships crossing versus 26 the prior day, after the IRGC announced a fresh closure of the waterway in response to Israeli strikes. The five included three VLCCs each laden with two million barrels of Saudi crude and fuel oil, one bound for Japan, and the count excludes vessels running with transponders dark. The day before, three supertankers carrying UAE, Kuwaiti, and Iraqi crude and three tankers of refined products had exited, along with two South Korea-operated ships transiting after last week’s memorandum, leaving the roughly 20 million barrels per day that normally move through the chokepoint exposed to any sustained stoppage.
- Japan’s Nikkei jumped above 72,000 for the first time on Monday.