Israel

Figures current as of October 2026

Israel as of October 22, 2026, written before the Knesset election of October 27: the founding and the wars, the political system and the campaign, Netanyahu and his bloc, the tribes of the society, the security state, Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem, the northern front, Iran, the economy, and the world's changed view. The election and the other dates ahead are in Module 13.

MODULE 1 — Foundations

Goal: Set the country's numbers, divisions, and vocabulary.

The population and its groups; the land and its fronts; the four tribes and the fifth; the terms, from Zionism and the Green Line to the coalition and aliyah.

MODULE 2 — A Brief History

Goal: Trace the state from Herzl to October 7.

Zionism and the Mandate; 1948 and its two names; 1967 and 1973; the treaties with Egypt and Jordan; Oslo and the intifadas; the Gaza withdrawal; the Netanyahu era; October 7, 2023.

MODULE 3 — The Political System

Goal: Understand how votes become governments, and why they deadlock.

One national district and the threshold; the Basic Laws and the missing constitution; the courts and the overhaul, argued both ways; the machinery of a coalition; the 2022 result, the October polls, and the coalition math of October 27, worked.

MODULE 4 — Netanyahu and the Right

Goal: Read the man who has defined the era and the bloc around him.

The prime minister and his trial; the 2022-26 coalition, its full term, and its last laws; the far right and the Haredi parties; the opposition after Eisenkot's rise and the Bennett-Lapid merger.

MODULE 5 — The Society

Goal: Map the tribes and the arithmetic between them.

The demography that decides; the Haredim and the draft, argued both ways; the Arab citizens and the homicide crisis; the other divides; emigration.

MODULE 6 — The Security State

Goal: Understand the army, the agencies, and the doctrine.

The reserve army and its budget; the IDF, the Mossad, the Shin Bet, and the missile shield; the doctrine; the October 7 failure and the inquiry, argued both ways.

MODULE 7 — Gaza

Goal: Follow the war that defined the era, with both sides' cases made.

The strip before October 7; the war in phases; the hostages; the aid fight; the numbers and the dispute over them; the cases on the war's conduct; the ceasefire and the stalled day after; the courts.

MODULE 8 — The West Bank and Jerusalem

Goal: Map the territory where the conflict's future is decided.

The territory and its two populations; the Palestinian Authority; settlement, settler violence, and the annexation question; Jerusalem; the cases and the two-state idea.

MODULE 9 — The Northern Front

Goal: Read the borders that produced two wars in two years.

Hezbollah before October 7; the 2024 war; the 2026 war, the ceasefires, and the security zone; Syria after Assad; whether the buffer zones are security or occupation.

MODULE 10 — Iran

Goal: Follow the shadow war to the open war and what it left.

From sabotage to June 2025 and the 2026 war; the memorandum and its collapse; the uranium the inspectors cannot find; whether the campaigns achieved their aims; the interceptor problem.

MODULE 11 — The Economy

Goal: Explain the war economy that boomed.

The paradox; the technology sector; the gas; the war's bill, worked; the structural problems; whether the resilience is durable or borrowed.

MODULE 12 — Israel and the World

Goal: Read the alliances, the ruptures, and the diaspora.

The American relationship and the turn in its public; the region after the Iran war; Europe, the Global South, and the courts; the diaspora and antisemitism.

MODULE 13 — Where Things Stand, and What to Watch

Goal: Assemble the picture and name the dates.

The argument in one page; five contradictions; what the vote will and will not settle; the watch list, from the election to the court dates of 2029; the last word.

A note on contested ground. Modules 7 and 8 cover the most disputed subjects in this course. On every contested question the course gives each side's case as its own advocates make it, then the evidence, then its own reading, stated once and labeled. Disputed numbers are marked as disputed, with their sources.

Officeholders, as of October 22, 2026

The Israeli, Palestinian, and regional leaders the course names, with their ages on October 22, 2026 and their years in office

The State of Israel

Office	Officeholder	Age	In office since (years)	How chosen
President	Isaac Herzog	66	Jul 7, 2021 (5)	Elected by the Knesset on June 2, 2021, 87-26, for a single seven-year term
Prime Minister	Benjamin Netanyahu	77	Dec 29, 2022 (3); also prime minister 1996-99 and 2009-21	The Knesset's vote of confidence in his government after the November 2022 election
Speaker of the Knesset	Amir Ohana	50	Dec 29, 2022 (3)	Elected by the Knesset
Minister of Defense	Israel Katz	71	Nov 2024 (1)	Named by the prime minister after he dismissed Yoav Gallant
Minister of Finance, and minister in the Defense Ministry	Bezalel Smotrich	46	Dec 29, 2022 (3)	The coalition agreement
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Gideon Sa'ar	59	Nov 2024 (1)	Named by the prime minister
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice	Yariv Levin	57	Dec 29, 2022 (3)	The coalition agreement
Minister of National Security	Itamar Ben-Gvir	50	Dec 29, 2022 (3), with a break from January to March 2025	The coalition agreement
Attorney General	Gali Baharav-Miara	67	Feb 2022 (4)	Appointed by a unanimous government vote; the government's attempt to fire her was annulled by the High Court (Module 3)
President of the Supreme Court	Isaac Amit	68	Feb 13, 2025 (1)	Elected by the Judicial Selection Committee on January 26, 2025, after a court order to convene it
Governor of the Bank of Israel	Amir Yaron	61-62	Dec 24, 2018 (7); second term from December 2023	Appointed by the government on the prime minister's recommendation

The Security Chiefs

Office	Officeholder	Age	In office since (years)	How chosen
Chief of the General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)	Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir	60	Mar 5, 2025 (1)	Named by the defense minister; approved by the government
Director of the Mossad	Roman Gofman	49	Jun 2, 2026 (4 months)	Named by the prime minister in December 2025; approved by the senior-appointments committee in April 2026
Director of the Shin Bet	David Zini	52	Oct 5, 2025 (1)	Named by the prime minister; approved by the senior-appointments committee and the cabinet for five years
Head of Military Intelligence	Maj. Gen. Shlomi Binder	51	Aug 21, 2024 (2)	Agreed by the defense minister and the chief of staff

The Leaders of the Lists Running on October 27

List	Leader	Age	Leading it since	Note
Likud	Benjamin Netanyahu	77	Dec 2005	Above
Yashar! with Eisenkot	Gadi Eisenkot	66	Sept 2025, when he founded it	Chief of the general staff 2015-19
Together (B'Yachad)	Naftali Bennett	54	Apr 26, 2026, the Bennett-Lapid merger	Prime minister 2021-22
Yesh Atid, running within Together	Yair Lapid	62	2012, when he founded it	Prime minister July-December 2022
Yisrael Beytenu	Avigdor Liberman	68	1999, when he founded it	A former defense and finance minister
The Democrats	Yair Golan	64	Jul 2024, when Labor and Meretz merged	A former deputy chief of staff
Shas	Aryeh Deri	67	2013, after an earlier term in the 1990s	The Mizrahi Haredi party
United Torah Judaism (UTJ)	Yaakov Asher	61	Sept 6, 2026, replacing Moshe Gafni	The Ashkenazi Haredi alliance
Religious Zionism-Zehut	Bezalel Smotrich	46	Before the 2022 election	With Moshe Feiglin's Zehut second on the list
Otzma Yehudit	Itamar Ben-Gvir	50	Before the 2022 election	The far right
The Joint List (Hadash, Ta'al, Balad)	Yousef Jabareen	54	May 2026, as Hadash's chairman	Replaced Ayman Odeh at Hadash
Ra'am	Mansour Abbas	52	2018	The Islamist party that joined the 2021 government
Amcha Yisrael	Ofer Winter	55	Aug 25, 2026, when he founded it	A former brigadier general

List	Leader	Age	Leading it since	Note
The Reservists-Economic Party	Yoaz Hendel	51	Sept 6, 2026, in alliance with Yaron Zelekha	A former communications minister

The Palestinians, the Neighbors, and the Mediators

Office	Officeholder	Age	In office since (years)	How chosen
President of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)	Mahmoud Abbas	90 (91 on Nov 15)	Jan 15, 2005 (21)	Elected in January 2005 with 63% for a four-year term; no election since
Vice President of the PA and designated interim successor	Hussein al-Sheikh	65	Apr 26, 2025 (1)	Appointed by Abbas; named interim successor by decree in October 2025
Chief Commissioner, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG)	Ali Shaath	68	Jan 14, 2026 (9 months)	Named by the Egyptian, Qatari, and Turkish mediators; supervised by the Board of Peace
High Representative for Gaza, the Board of Peace	Nickolay Mladenov	54	Jan 2026 (9 months)	Appointed by the United States
Chairman of the Board of Peace, and President of the United States	Donald Trump	80	Jan 20, 2025 (1); the board since January 2026	Elected; the board's charter
Secretary-General of Hezbollah	Naim Qassem	73	Oct 29, 2024 (1)	Elected by the party after Hassan Nasrallah's killing
President of Lebanon	Joseph Aoun	62	Jan 9, 2025 (1)	Elected by parliament, 99 of 128 votes
Prime Minister of Lebanon	Nawaf Salam	72	Feb 8, 2025 (1)	Nominated by parliament; confirmed by the president
President of Syria	Ahmed al-Sharaa	43 (44 on Oct 29)	Jan 29, 2025 (1), after leading Assad's overthrow	Appointed by the victorious factions; a constitutional declaration of March 2025
Supreme Leader of Iran	Mojtaba Khamenei	57	Mar 8, 2026 (7 months)	Chosen by the Assembly of Experts after his father's killing
President of Iran	Masoud Pezeshkian	72	Jul 2024 (2)	Elected

Ages and years in office are as of October 22, 2026, from birth and appointment dates taken mostly from Wikipedia, with news reports for some appointments. Amir Yaron's exact birth date was not found, hence the range.

Who's Who, as of October 22, 2026

The institutions, parties, organizations, places, and people the course names; the officeholders and list leaders are in the tables before this page

Israeli Institutions

Name	What it is
The Knesset	The parliament, elected by nationwide proportional representation (Module 3)
The government; the security cabinet	The ministers who hold the Knesset's confidence, and the smaller group of them that decides on war and security
The president	The head of state, elected by the Knesset for a single term, who assigns the mandate to form a government and decides pardons (Modules 3 and 4)
The Supreme Court, sitting as the High Court of Justice	The highest court, which hears petitions against the state directly (Module 3)
The Judicial Selection Committee	The body that appoints judges, the overhaul's main target (Module 3)
The attorney general; the State Comptroller	The government's chief legal adviser and head of the prosecution, and the state's auditor, elected by the Knesset (Modules 3-6)
The Central Elections Committee	The body of party representatives, chaired by a Supreme Court justice, that runs elections (Module 3)
The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS); the Bank of Israel	The official statistics agency and the central bank (Modules 1, 5, and 11)
The National Insurance Institute; the Israel Innovation Authority	The social-security agency, whose counts of the war's civilian dead the course cites, and the agency that funds and measures the technology industry (Modules 6, 10, and 11)
The IDF; Military Intelligence; Unit 8200	The armed forces, a single service; the directorate that owns the national intelligence assessment; and its signals unit (Module 6)
The Mossad; the Shin Bet	The foreign intelligence service and the domestic security service (Module 6)
The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT)	The Defense Ministry body that manages civil affairs and aid crossings for Gaza and the West Bank (Module 7)

Parties Within the Lists

Name	What it is
Degel HaTorah; Agudat Yisrael	The non-Hasidic and Hasidic Ashkenazi Haredi parties that make up United Torah Judaism (Modules 4 and 5)
Yesh Atid	Lapid's centrist party, running within Together
National Unity; Blue and White	Benny Gantz's alliances: the first, which Eisenkot left, and his later list, which left the race (Module 3)
Labor; Meretz	The parties of the old left, merged as the Democrats
Hadash; Ta'al; Balad	The Arab-Jewish front led by communists, Ahmad Tibi's party, and the Arab nationalist party, running together as the Joint List (Module 3)
Zehut	Moshe Feiglin's nationalist party, running with Religious Zionism
Emet L'Yaakov; the October Council	A Haredi group that has argued against the draft in court, and the bereaved families' group that demands a state commission (Modules 5 and 6)

Palestinian, Regional, and International Bodies

Name	What it is
Fatah; Hamas; Palestinian Islamic Jihad	The nationalist movement that leads the PLO and the PA; the Islamic Resistance Movement, which took over Gaza; and a smaller armed Islamist group allied with Hamas and Iran (Modules 7 and 8)
The Board of Peace; the International Stabilization Force (ISF)	The body Trump chairs to oversee Gaza's transition, and the force the Security Council authorized for Gaza (Module 7)
The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA); the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	The agency for Palestinian refugees, and the UN's humanitarian coordinator, whose data the course cites for Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon (Modules 7-9)
The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC); the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF)	The international system that classifies hunger and declares famine, and the American-backed aid distributor (Module 7)
The International Court of Justice (ICJ); the International Criminal Court (ICC)	The UN's court for disputes between states, and the court that tries individuals (Modules 7 and 8)
The UN commission of inquiry	The Human Rights Council's standing commission on the occupied territories (Module 7)
The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)	The UN's nuclear inspectorate (Module 10)
Hezbollah; the UN force in southern Lebanon	The Lebanese Shia party and militia allied with Iran, and the peacekeeping force deployed in the south since 1978 (Module 9)
The Houthis	The Iranian-backed movement that rules much of northern Yemen (Modules 1 and 10)
Iran's Revolutionary Guards; the Assembly of Experts	Iran's ideological army, and the clerical body that chooses the supreme leader (Module 10)
The Abraham Accords	The normalization agreements between Israel and Arab states (Module 12)

Research Groups, Monitors, Pollsters, and Media

Name	What it is
The Israel Democracy Institute (IDI); the Taub Center	Israeli research institutes on politics, society, and the economy (Modules 3, 5, and 6)
The Abraham Initiatives; the Moshe Dayan Center	An Arab-Jewish group that counts homicides in Arab society, and Tel Aviv University's center for Middle Eastern studies, which surveys Arab citizens (Module 5)
Peace Now; B'Tselem; Yesh Din	Israeli groups that monitor settlement, the occupation, and law enforcement in the West Bank (Module 8)
Amnesty International; Human Rights Watch	International human-rights groups (Module 8)
Freedom House; the V-Dem Institute	The publishers of the democracy ratings in Module 3
The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)	The source of the military-spending and arms-trade figures (Modules 6 and 12)
The Center for Strategic and International Studies; the Foundation for Defense of Democracies; the Atlantic Council; the Middle East Forum	Washington and Philadelphia research groups cited on the wars (Modules 9 and 10)
The Institute for Science and International Security; the Royal United Services Institute	An American research group on nuclear programs, and a British defense institute (Module 10)
The Anti-Defamation League; the Community Security Trust	The monitors of antisemitism in the United States and Britain (Module 12)

Name	What it is
Gallup	The American polling firm whose survey of sympathies is in Module 12
Lazar Research and Panel4All; Direct Polls; Kantar; Midgam and iPanel; Madad; Tatika Research	The firms behind the October polls (Module 3)
Kan; Channels 12, 13, and 14; i24NEWS	Israel's public broadcaster and its main commercial and news channels
Maariv; *Yedioth Ahronoth* and Ynet; the *Times of Israel* and Zman Yisrael; the *Jerusalem Post*; Walla	Israeli newspapers and news sites the course cites
L'Orient Today; *The National*; Naharnet; Semafor	Lebanese, Emirati, and American news outlets the course cites (Modules 9 and 10)

Places

Name	What it is
Areas A, B, and C	The Oslo zones of the West Bank (Module 8)
E1, the corridor east of Jerusalem	The planned settlement area that would cut the West Bank's north from its south (Module 8)
The Temple Mount, or Haram al-Sharif	The Old City compound of the ancient Temples and the al-Aqsa mosque (Module 8)
Kerem Shalom; Rafah; the Philadelphi corridor	Gaza's crossings with Israel and Egypt, and its border strip with Egypt (Module 7)
Sde Teiman	The army base where detainees from Gaza were held (Module 7)
The Yellow Line	The lines behind which Israeli forces hold ground in Gaza and southern Lebanon (Modules 7 and 9)
The Litani River; Mount Hermon; Sweida	The river in southern Lebanon north of which Hezbollah was to withdraw; the summit Israel took in Syria after Assad's fall; and the Druze province of southern Syria (Module 9)
Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan	Iran's main nuclear sites (Module 10)
The Strait of Hormuz; Ras Laffan	The Gulf's outlet to the ocean, and Qatar's gas complex (Module 10)
Tamar, Leviathan, and Karish	Israel's offshore gas fields (Module 11)

People Named and Quoted

Name	Who they are
Reuven Rivlin	President in 2014-21, author of the 'four tribes' speech (Module 1)
Yoav Gallant	Defense minister in 2022-24, dismissed by Netanyahu, and named in an ICC warrant (Modules 6 and 7)
Noam Sohlberg; Alex Stein	The Supreme Court's deputy president, who chairs the Central Elections Committee, and a Supreme Court justice (Modules 3 and 5)
Simcha Rothman	The Religious Zionism legislator who led the overhaul as chairman of the Knesset's Constitution Committee (Module 3)
Rivka Friedman-Feldman; Avichai Mandelblit	The presiding judge in Netanyahu's trial, and the attorney general who indicted him and testified in the defense's case (Module 4)
Gil Limon; Michael Rabello	The deputy attorney general, and the government's lawyer in the inquiry case, elected State Comptroller (Modules 5 and 6)

Name	Who they are
Sharren Haskel; Dan Illouz	A deputy foreign minister who resigned over the draft, and a Likud legislator who joined Yisrael Beytenu (Modules 4 and 5)
Moshe Gafni; Rabbi Dov Lando	The Degel HaTorah leader whom Yaakov Asher replaced at the head of UTJ in September 2026, and Degel's spiritual authority (Modules 4 and 5)
Ayman Odeh; Ofer Cassif	Hadash's former leader and a Hadash legislator (Module 3)
Herzi Halevi; Ronen Bar; David Barnea	The chief of staff, the Shin Bet's director, and the Mossad's director on October 7, 2023 (Module 6)
Sami Turgeman	The retired general whose panel reviewed the army's investigations of October 7 (Module 6)
Menachem Lazar; Amnon Cavari; Dana Blander	Maariv's pollster, a political scientist at Reichman University, and a researcher at the IDI (Modules 3 and 6)
Itai Ater; Gilad Malach; Lee Cahaner	A Tel Aviv University economist who studies emigration, and the IDI's researchers on Haredi society (Module 5)
Natan Rosenblatt; Yossi Dagan	Counsel for Emet L'Yaakov, and the head of the Samaria Regional Council, a settler leader (Modules 5 and 8)
Yahya Sinwar; Mohammed Deif; Ismail Haniyeh	Hamas's leader in Gaza, its military commander, and its political chief, all since killed (Module 7)
Khalil al-Hayya; Hussam al-Astal; Ran Gvili	Hamas's leader for Gaza, based in Doha; the head of an Israel-backed militia in Khan Younis; and the last hostage whose remains were returned (Module 7)
Mohammed Dahlan; Mustafa Barghouti	A former Fatah security chief and rival of Abbas, and the leader of the Palestinian National Initiative (Module 8)
Marco Rubio; Mike Huckabee; Tom Barrack	The American secretary of state, the ambassador to Israel, and the envoy for Syria (Modules 8, 9, and 12)
Jasper Jeffers; Brad Cooper	The American general who commands the stabilization force for Gaza, and the admiral who commands American forces in the Middle East (Modules 7 and 10)
Ed Miliband; Friedrich Merz; Kaja Kallas; Péter Magyar	Britain's foreign secretary, Germany's chancellor, the EU's foreign-policy chief, and Hungary's prime minister (Modules 8 and 12)
Mohammed bin Salman; Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	Saudi Arabia's crown prince and prime minister, and Turkey's president (Module 12)
Asaad al-Shaibani; Hikmat al-Hijri	Syria's foreign minister, and the Druze spiritual leader in Sweida (Module 9)
Hassan Nasrallah	Hezbollah's leader from 1992 until Israel killed him (Module 9)
Mohsen Rezaei	The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council since August 2026 (Module 10)
Ali Khamenei; Mohammad Pakpour; Mohsen Fakhrizadeh	Iran's supreme leader from 1989, and the Guards' commander, both killed in the opening strikes of 2026, and the nuclear scientist killed in the shadow war (Module 10)
Amine Ayoub; Miroslav Zafirov; Ahmad Baydoun	Writers for the Middle East Forum and the Atlantic Council, and a Lebanese researcher, on the buffer zones (Module 9)
Reuel Marc Gerecht	A former officer of the Central Intelligence Agency, now at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (Module 10)
Yali Rothenberg	The Finance Ministry's accountant general as of January 2026 (Module 11)

Module 1 — Foundations

The Country in Numbers and Its Divisions

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History* (2012)

Reference: The Central Bureau of Statistics' annual population release before Rosh Hashanah (cbs.gov.il; September 9, 2026), the source for this module's population figures

1a. What Israel Is

Israel was founded in 1948 as the state of the Jewish people, and it is home today to a large share of the world's Jews (1b). It is several things at once. It is a parliamentary democracy with a combative press and loud politics. It has held territory with millions of Palestinians who are not its citizens since 1967. It is a technology economy with a rich country's income, and its society is organized around an army that most Jewish citizens serve in and two large communities, the Haredim and the Arab citizens, largely do not.

Since October 7, 2023 it has fought the longest war in its history, on the five fronts set out in 1d. On October 27, 2026 it elects a new Knesset, in a vote that is a referendum on the war, on the man who led it, and on every division this module maps.

1b. The Numbers

Measure	Figure	Note
Population	10.305 million in September 2026, up about 124,000 (1.2%) in a year	7.828 million Jews and others and 2.173 million Arabs, East Jerusalem's Palestinian residents among them (78.3% and 21.7%), plus 304,000 foreign nationals; the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) revised its method in 2026
Births	About 182,000 a year, against about 24,000 immigrants	Births outnumber immigrants more than seven to one; migration is in Module 5
Fertility	2.88 children per woman	Against an average of 1.41 in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the club of rich democracies
Territory	About 22,000 square kilometers, including East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights	Israel applied its law to East Jerusalem in 1967 and to the Golan in 1981; almost no other state recognizes either annexation. The West Bank is in Module 8 and Gaza in Module 7
Economy	GDP per person of 208,900 new Israeli shekels (NIS) in 2025, about $68,000 at the October 16, 2026 exchange rate	Growth of 3.1% in 2025 on the first estimate (Module 11)
Jews worldwide	15.9 million on January 1, 2026	About 46% of them live in Israel (Module 12)
Human development	0.919 on the UN's index, 27th in the world	The UN Development Programme's 2025 report, on 2023 data
Government	A parliamentary system; a Knesset elected by nationwide proportional representation	Module 3
Capital and cities	Jerusalem, which Israel calls its capital (Module 8); Tel Aviv, the economic center; Haifa, the port	Most embassies are in Tel Aviv; the United States moved its own to Jerusalem in 2018

CBS (September 9, 2026, and the 2025 national accounts); the UN Development Programme (2025). Population figures cover Israel, East Jerusalem, and the Golan; the settlers of the West Bank are counted in the total. The shekel is converted at the Bank of Israel's representative rate, NIS 3.089 to the dollar on October 16, 2026.

1c. The Four Tribes and the Fifth

In 2015 President Reuven Rivlin gave the speech that named the country's structure. Israel, he said, is not a majority with minorities but four 'tribes' of comparable weight: secular Jews, national-religious Jews, the Haredim (the 'ultra-Orthodox'), and Arab citizens. Each has its own school system, neighborhoods, and media, and none is destined to be a majority.

The Jewish population sorts itself, by its own description, into five groups. The CBS's surveys ask Jewish adults to place themselves as secular, traditional but not very religious, traditional and religious, religious, or Haredi. The traditional, or *masorti*, the tribe Rivlin's four leave out, are observant in part and largely Mizrahi in origin. The religious are the national-religious camp of the settlements and the officer corps.

The proportions are not stable, because the tribes do not have children at the same rate, and the Haredim are the fastest-growing (Module 5). The fourth of Rivlin's tribes, the Arab citizens, is about 85% Muslim, with Christian and Druze minorities. Its members hold full citizenship, vote, and sit in the Knesset and on the Supreme Court. They also live with gaps in income, land, and municipal budgets that every government has acknowledged and none has closed. Whether the tribes share one army, one economy, and one law is the substance of Israeli domestic politics, the subject of Modules 3 to 5.

1d. The Land and the Fronts

- **The shape.** A coastal plain holds most of the people and the economy, from Haifa to Ashkelon, with the Galilee to the north and the Negev desert, over half the land, to the south. The mountain spine of Jerusalem and the West Bank runs down the middle. At its narrowest the country is 15 kilometers wide between the Green Line and the sea, the geography behind its security doctrine.
- **Gaza.** The strip on the southern coast, occupied from 1967 until Israel withdrew, and blockaded after Hamas took it, the origin of October 7 and the theater of the war that followed (Module 7).
- **The north.** The Lebanese border, with Hezbollah beyond it, and the Golan Heights facing Syria: the front of the 2024 and 2026 wars and of the zones Israel now holds in both countries (Module 9).
- **Iran.** Not a border but the organizing threat: the nuclear program, the network of allied militias, and the open wars of June 2025 and 2026 (Module 10).
- **The West Bank.** The territory between the Green Line and the Jordan, held since 1967, where Palestinians and Israeli settlers live under different legal systems (Module 8).
- **The long range.** Yemen's Houthis, 2,000 kilometers away, whose missiles and drones reached Israel through the war and whose attacks on shipping rerouted world trade (Module 10).

1e. The Vocabulary

Term	Meaning	Where it appears
Zionism	The movement for a Jewish state in the historic homeland; the state's founding ideology, in variants from liberal to religious-nationalist	Module 2
The Green Line	The armistice line of 1949: the de facto border until 1967 and the reference line for every peace plan since	Modules 2 and 8
The Knesset	The parliament, elected in one nationwide district by party list	Module 3
The coalition	The Knesset majority that every government must assemble from several parties	Modules 3 and 4
The blocs	The camps for and against Netanyahu, with the Arab parties outside both	Modules 3 and 4
Aliyah	'Ascent': Jewish immigration to Israel, open under the Law of Return to any Jew and to the children and grandchildren of Jews	Modules 2 and 5
Haredi and national-religious	The two religious camps: the Haredim, who largely stand apart from the army and the labor market, and the national-religious, who lead in both	Module 5
Nakba	'Catastrophe': the Palestinian name for the displacement of 1948, the Palestinians' founding grievance	Modules 2 and 7
The occupation, or the territories	The West Bank, and until 2005 Gaza, held since 1967: 'occupied' in international law and most of the world's usage, 'disputed' or 'Judea and Samaria' in Israeli official usage; the dispute over the word is part of the subject	Module 8

Module 1 Key Points

Foundations

• Israel has 10.3 million people: 7.8 million Jews and others, 2.2 million Arabs, and 304,000 foreign nationals (September 2026).

• Fertility of 2.88 children per woman is double the rich-country average, so births outnumber immigrants more than seven to one.

• Rivlin's four tribes are secular, national-religious, Haredi, and Arab; the tribes are not growing at the same rate.

• Arab citizens have full political rights and lasting gaps; the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza are a different category.

• Nakba or independence, occupied or disputed: the vocabulary is part of the dispute, and the course marks it.

Module 1 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What population did the Central Bureau of Statistics report in September 2026?

A) About 12.5 million, counting the territories
B) About 10.3 million, of whom about 2.2 million are Arabs
C) About 9.1 million, excluding East Jerusalem
D) About 8.3 million, a quarter of them Arab

2. Which four groups did President Rivlin's 'tribes' speech name?

A) Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, Russian, and Ethiopian Jews
B) The parties of the Netanyahu bloc, the center, the left, and the Arab lists
C) Secular, national-religious, and Haredi Jews, and Arab citizens
D) Settlers, Tel Avivians, kibbutz members, and new immigrants from Russia

3. How does Israel's fertility rate compare with the rich-country average?

A) About the same, near two children per woman
B) Below it, because of emigration in 2024-25
C) Higher only among the Haredim; the rest are below 1.5
D) About double: 2.88 children per woman against 1.41

4. Which front does the course count although it is 2,000 kilometers away?

A) Yemen
B) Turkey
C) Northern Iraq
D) Sudan and Eritrea

5. What does the term 'Green Line' refer to?

A) The 1949 armistice line
B) The Gaza fence
C) The line that divided Beirut in the civil war
D) The border with Lebanon that the UN drew in 2000

Module 2 — A Brief History

From Herzl to October 7

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (2013)

Book: Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (2008)

Reference: The Israel State Archives and the UN's document collection on the question of Palestine, which hold the primary texts: the 1947 partition resolution, the 1948 declaration, Resolutions 242 and 338, and the Oslo Accords

2a. Zionism and the Mandate (1897-1947)

Modern Zionism begins with Theodor Herzl's pamphlet *The Jewish State* of 1896 and the first Zionist Congress at Basel a year later. Its argument was that European antisemitism would not be cured by assimilation and that Jews needed a state of their own in the land of their history. Waves of immigration built farms, towns, and institutions in Ottoman and then British Palestine.

Britain's Balfour Declaration of 1917 promised 'a national home for the Jewish people' in a land that was then over 90% Arab, and its League of Nations Mandate took up the promise. The two national movements collided through the 1920s and 1930s, in riots, an Arab revolt, and British commissions that first proposed partition in 1937. Then the Holocaust killed six million Jews, destroying the European Jewry that Zionism had meant to save, and turned the case for a state from an argument into an emergency.

In November 1947 the UN General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The Zionist leadership accepted. The Arab leadership in Palestine and the Arab states rejected the partition of a land they held to be Arab, and the civil war that decided the question began the next day.

2b. 1948: The War With Two Names

Israel declared independence on May 14, 1948, and the armies of five Arab states crossed the borders the next morning. By the armistices of 1949 the new state held 78% of Mandate Palestine, more than the partition plan had offered; Jordan held the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and Egypt held Gaza. About 700,000 Palestinian Arabs, more than half the Arab population, fled or were expelled from the territory that became Israel. Their villages were largely destroyed and their return was barred.

The Israeli account calls it the War of Independence: a defensive war forced on the state by the Arab rejection of partition, with flight amid the fighting, and a parallel uprooting of roughly 800,000 Jews from Arab countries in the following decades, most of whom Israel absorbed. The Palestinian account calls it the Nakba: expulsions, massacres such as Deir Yassin, and a return barred as policy, an account supported in part by Israel's own archives, opened from the 1980s.

The course's reading: the archival record supports parts of both accounts. The war followed the Arab rejection of partition and the invasion, and the exodus came from flight and expulsion together. The refugees and their descendants, counted in the millions by the UN, remain a core issue in every negotiation, which is why even the conflict's start date is disputed.

2c. 1967 and 1973

In June 1967, after Egypt massed forces in Sinai, closed the Straits of Tiran, and expelled the UN's peacekeepers, Israel struck first. In six days it took Sinai and Gaza from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria, and the occupation that Module 8 covers began. UN Security Council Resolution 242 set the formula that has governed diplomacy since: withdrawal from territories occupied, in exchange for peace and recognized boundaries, with a famous ambiguity over whether 'territories' meant all of them.

In October 1973 Egypt and Syria attacked on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, and achieved a surprise that brought the state closer to catastrophe than at any moment between 1948 and October 7. The war cost about 2,600 Israeli lives, and the intelligence failure produced the Agranat Commission and brought down a government. Four years later Menachem Begin's Likud ended three decades of Labor rule, the 1977 'upheaval' that made the right the usual party of government.

2d. The Treaties, Lebanon, and Oslo (1977-2000)

Begin, the hawk, made the first peace. Anwar Sadat came to Jerusalem in 1977, the Camp David accords followed in 1978, and the 1979 treaty returned all of Sinai for a peace with Egypt that has held, cold but unbroken, ever since. The 1982 invasion of Lebanon, meant to destroy the PLO, produced an 18-year occupation of the south, the massacre at Sabra and Shatila by Israel's Phalangist allies, and the birth of Hezbollah.

The first intifada, the uprising of 1987-93, convinced much of the Israeli center that the occupation had a price. The Oslo Accords of 1993-95 traded mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO for a PA with self-rule in parts of the territories, and deferred the hardest questions, Jerusalem, refugees, borders, and settlements, to a final settlement that never came. A Jewish extremist assassinated Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 for signing it. Hamas's suicide bombings and the growth of the settlements hollowed out the process from both sides, Jordan made a second cold peace in 1994, and the failure of the Camp David summit of 2000, which each side blames on the other, ended the decade of hope.

2e. The Second Intifada to the Blockade (2000-2009)

The second intifada of 2000-05 was a war rather than an uprising. Palestinian attacks, above all suicide bombings in buses and cafes, killed about 1,000 Israelis, and Israeli operations killed about 3,000 Palestinians. The experience destroyed the Israeli peace camp as a political force; the left has not won an election since 1999.

Ariel Sharon built the separation barrier, crushed the uprising, and in 2005 withdrew every soldier and settler from Gaza, along with four small settlements in the northern West Bank. The lesson of that disengagement is the most disputed in Israeli politics. To one side it shows that territory can be traded for quiet; to the other, after Hamas won the Palestinian elections that followed and seized the strip, it shows that withdrawal produces rocket fire. Israel and Egypt then sealed Gaza, and rounds of war followed (Module 7).

2f. The Netanyahu Era (2009-2023)

Benjamin Netanyahu returned to power in 2009 and has governed for all but 18 months since, the longest tenure in the state's history. The era's wager was that the Palestinian question could be managed rather than solved while Israel grew rich, armed, and diplomatically normal. It brought the technology boom, the 2020 Abraham Accords with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, which broke the link between normalization and a Palestinian state, and a deepening alignment with the American right.

The costs accumulated in parallel. Five elections between 2019 and 2022 deadlocked over Netanyahu's indictment until the last produced a majority. The coalition formed after the last of them (Module 4) launched a judicial overhaul in 2023 (Module 3) that brought hundreds of thousands into the streets for nine months, with reservists warning that they would not serve.

2g. October 7

At dawn on October 7, 2023, a religious holiday fifty years almost to the day after the surprise of 1973, Hamas breached the Gaza fence at dozens of points and attacked the communities, army bases, and music festival beyond it. About 1,200 people were killed, most of them civilians and 378 of them at the Nova festival, and 251 were taken hostage into Gaza. It was the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust.

It was also the worst failure of the Israeli state in its history. Military intelligence had the attack plan and dismissed it, the border defense collapsed for hours, and the strategic conception held across governments, that Hamas was deterred and contained, proved false. Everything after it, from the Gaza war to the Iran war, the economy, the world's turn, and the election, is the history this course covers in the present tense, and the fight over who answers for the failure is in Module 6.

Year	Event	Why it matters
1897	First Zionist Congress at Basel	The movement organized; 'in Basel I founded the Jewish state', Herzl wrote
1917 / 1922	Balfour Declaration; British Mandate	A great power adopts the national home; two national movements collide under one roof
1947	UN partition resolution (33-13)	Accepted by the Zionist leadership, rejected by the Arab side; the war begins the next day
1948-49	Independence and the Nakba	The new state and the refugee exodus: the conflict's founding facts
1967	The Six-Day War	Sinai, Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan taken; the occupation begins; Resolution 242
1973	The Yom Kippur War	The surprise, the Agranat Commission, and the right's rise in 1977
1979 / 1994	Peace with Egypt; peace with Jordan	The cold peaces that have held through every war since
1993-95	The Oslo Accords; Rabin assassinated	Mutual recognition, the PA, and the deferred final settlement
2000-05	The second intifada	The barrier, and the collapse of the Israeli left
2005-07	The Gaza disengagement; Hamas takes the strip	The most disputed lesson in Israeli politics; the blockade and the wars that followed
2020	The Abraham Accords	Normalization with Arab states without a Palestinian state
2023	The judicial overhaul; October 7	Months of internal crisis, then the worst day in the state's history

Dates and figures follow the standard histories and UN records; the refugee figures of 1948 are contested within ranges the module's text gives.

Module 2 Key Points

A Brief History

• Zionism built a state through immigration and institutions; the 1947 partition plan was accepted by the Zionist side and rejected by the Arab side.

• 1948 left a Jewish state on 78% of the Mandate and about 700,000 Palestinian refugees; each side names the war differently.

• 1967 began the occupation and Resolution 242's land-for-peace formula; 1973's surprise brought an inquiry and, in 1977, the right's first victory.

• Egypt's 1979 peace has held through every war; Oslo deferred the hard questions and died with Rabin, the bombings, and the second intifada.

• October 7, 2023, with about 1,200 killed and 251 taken hostage, ended the wager that the conflict could be managed.

Module 2 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What did UN Resolution 242 establish after the 1967 war?

A) A permanent UN administration for Jerusalem
B) The admission of a Palestinian state to the United Nations as a full member
C) The land-for-peace formula, with an ambiguity over 'territories'
D) A binding return to the 1947 partition map

2. What does the course conclude about the two accounts of 1948?

A) Only the Israeli account rests on archival evidence
B) The archival record supports parts of both, and the exodus came from flight and expulsion together
C) Both accounts have been abandoned by historians
D) The refugee figures are settled at 700,000 exactly

3. What happened to the Israeli peace camp after the second intifada?

A) It won the 2003 election
B) It merged with the settlers' movement under Sharon's leadership
C) It grew, as the bombings strengthened the case for leaving the territories quickly
D) It collapsed

4. Why does the course call the lesson of the 2005 Gaza withdrawal the most disputed in Israeli politics?

A) Egypt annexed the strip within a year of the withdrawal
B) The courts later ruled the withdrawal unlawful
C) The evacuated settlers were never rehoused
D) One side reads it as proof that territory buys quiet, the other as proof that withdrawal brings rocket fire

5. How many people were taken hostage into Gaza on October 7, 2023?

A) 105
B) 251 people
C) About 1,200
D) About 2,000, most of them soldiers

Module 3 — The Political System

How Votes Become Governments, and Why They Deadlock

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Reuven Y. Hazan, Alan Dowty, Menachem Hofnung, and Gideon Rahat (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Israeli Politics and Society* (2021)

Reference: The Knesset's site (knesset.gov.il) for the Basic Laws and the results, and the Israel Democracy Institute (en.idi.org.il) for the standard analyses of the system and the overhaul

3a. One District, 120 Seats

Israel elects its 120-seat Knesset in a single nationwide district by closed party list. A list that clears the threshold of 3.25% of the vote, about four seats, wins seats in proportion to its votes, divided by the D'Hondt method, which Israelis call Bader-Ofer; pairs of lists may sign surplus-vote agreements to pool their remainders. There are no constituencies and no directly elected prime minister, an experiment tried from 1996 to 2001 and abandoned.

The design is among the purest proportional systems in the world, and it has a predictable result. No party has ever won a majority, and every government is a coalition in which even the smallest partner holds a veto (3d). That is why the Haredi parties, with about a seventh of the vote (3e), have won draft exemptions and school budgets from governments of both camps for decades. The prime minister is simply the leader who can assemble 61 seats.

3b. The Basic Laws and the Missing Constitution

Israel has no written constitution. The 1948 declaration promised one, but the first Knesset could not agree, chiefly over religion and the state, and adopted the Harari compromise of 1950: the constitution would be written chapter by chapter as 'Basic Laws'. Thirteen were passed between 1958 and 2018, among them Human Dignity and Liberty (1992), the nearest thing to a bill of rights, and the Nation-State Law (2018).

The Nation-State Law defines Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, downgrades Arabic's status, and omits any mention of equality. Its authors call it constitutional identity; the Arab minority and much of the opposition call it constitutional demotion. A fourteenth Basic Law, passed on July 13, 2026 by 63 to 52, declares that 'Torah study is a fundamental value in the heritage of the Jewish people and in the State of Israel', the coalition's answer to the draft rulings of Module 5.

The catch that produced the 2023 crisis is structural. Basic Laws pass by a bare majority like any other law, so the constitution is whatever the majority of the day says it is. The only institution that has ever checked that power is the Supreme Court, which in the 'constitutional revolution' of the 1990s under Aharon Barak claimed the authority to strike down ordinary laws that violate Basic Laws.

3c. The Courts and the Overhaul

The overhaul that the justice minister, Yariv Levin, announced in January 2023 would have given the coalition control of judicial appointments, ended the courts' review of government decisions for 'reasonableness', and let the Knesset override rulings. Nine months of the largest protests in the state's

history followed. The reasonableness amendment passed in July 2023, and on January 1, 2024 the Supreme Court struck it down, 8-7. Thirteen of the fifteen justices held that the court may review Basic Laws, and the ruling was the first to void part of one.

October 7 paused the program but did not end it. On March 27, 2025 the Knesset passed a law reshaping the Judicial Selection Committee, 67-1, after the opposition walked out. It replaces the two Bar Association seats with two jurists, one chosen by coalition members and one by the opposition, gives the coalition four of nine seats, and lets a Supreme Court appointment pass without any justice's vote. It takes effect when the next Knesset convenes, unless the High Court, hearing nine petitions before eleven justices, strikes it down first.

The fight spread to the law officers. The government fired the attorney general, Gali Baharav-Miara, on August 4, 2025, and the High Court annulled the firing 7-0 on December 14. In July 2026 the coalition passed a law splitting her office, 65-51, which would let the government disregard her legal opinions. Isaac Amit became president of the Supreme Court only after the court ordered Levin to convene the selection committee, and Levin boycotted his swearing-in.

Those who call it a restoration argue that an unelected court had taken powers the voters never gave it. Simcha Rothman of Religious Zionism, who chairs the Knesset's Constitution Committee, called the selection law in March 2025 'a crucial step in restoring the balance between the branches of government'. Levin said it 'puts an end to the member-brings-member system used in appointments', and the foreign minister, Gideon Sa'ar, called it 'an evolutionary and balanced change, based on our constitutional tradition'. The law's defenders told the High Court in July 2026 that letting it override the Knesset's constitutional rules would turn 'the rule of law' into 'the rule of judges'.

Those who call it the removal of the only check argue that with no written constitution, no second chamber, no federalism, and no presidential veto, the court is the one restraint on a bare majority. The opposition leaders said in March 2025 that the selection law's single purpose was 'to ensure that judges become subservient to the will of politicians'. Amit wrote in the December 2025 ruling that 'the rule of law does not exclude anyone, including state authorities and organizations', and Justice Alex Stein warned at the hearing on the selection law that a judge might need to 'find favor in the eyes of politicians'.

The evidence gives each side a point. Under the old rules an appointment needed seven of nine votes, so the justices and the Bar's representatives held an effective veto; under the new law the coalition's votes and one opposition vote suffice. The international ratings record a decline since 2023, though Freedom House still rates Israel Free.

Rating	Israel	The West Bank	The Gaza Strip
Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2026*	73 of 100, Free (political rights 34 of 40, civil liberties 39 of 60), unchanged from 2025	22 of 100, Not Free	2 of 100, Not Free
V-Dem, *Democracy Report 2026* (March 2026)	An electoral democracy near the line of a liberal one; downgraded from liberal democracy in the 2024 report, on 2023 data	Not rated separately	Not rated separately

Freedom House scores the West Bank and Gaza as territories, not as parts of Israel. Freedom House's 2026 report adds that 'the judiciary's independence has come under growing political pressure in recent years'; Amnon Cavari of Reichman University reads V-Dem's 2026 data as showing 'a more sustained and accelerating regression'.

The course's reading: the overhaul is no longer frozen but partly enacted, and the fight over the attorney general is in the courts. Both sides describe a real problem, a judiciary that once held a veto over its own membership against a coalition that would now hold a near-decisive say. Which prevails turns on October 27 and on a ruling that has not come.

3d. The Machinery of a Coalition

- **Forming.** After an election the president consults every list and gives the mandate to the likeliest builder, who has 28 days, extendable by 14. Coalition agreements are published contracts that trade ministries, budgets, and legislation for the partners' signatures.
- **Governing.** The cabinet votes by majority but lives by veto: any partner whose red line is crossed can walk out, so the smallest party's priorities, from settlement budgets to the exemptions in 3a, often outrank the largest party's.
- **Falling.** A government falls by losing a confidence vote, failing to pass a budget, which dissolves the Knesset automatically, or voting to dissolve itself. Module 4 has how the government of 2022-26 ended.
- **The threshold.** Small parties live or die by mergers. A list that runs alone and misses wastes its camp's votes, as Meretz and Balad did in 2022 (3e), so every campaign ends in a scramble of alliances.
- **The blocs.** Since 2019 the real unit of politics has been the bloc rather than the party: the camp that backs Netanyahu against the camp that opposes him, with the Arab lists outside both.

3e. The Election of October 27

In 2022 the Netanyahu bloc won 64 seats with 48.4% of the vote. The lists for 2026 closed on September 8. Bennett and Lapid had merged as Together, Religious Zionism ran with Moshe Feiglin's Zehut, and Hadash, Ta'al, and Balad reunited as the Joint List without Ra'am. On September 23 the Central Elections Committee voted to bar both Arab lists, at the Likud's request. On October 2 a nine-justice panel of the Supreme Court reinstated them unanimously, and reinstated the Hadash candidate Ofer Cassif by 7 to 2. Benny Gantz withdrew Blue and White on October 19 after polling below the threshold all autumn, and its ballots were removed when all its candidates quit. Israel has 7,331,981 eligible voters, and soldiers began voting on October 21.

List (2022)	Votes	Share	Seats
Likud	1,115,336	23.41%	32
Yesh Atid	847,435	17.79%	24
Religious Zionism-Otzma Yehudit	516,470	10.84%	14
National Unity	432,482	9.08%	12
Shas	392,964	8.25%	11
United Torah Judaism	280,194	5.88%	7
Yisrael Beytenu	213,687	4.48%	6
Ra'am	194,047	4.07%	5
Hadash-Ta'al	178,735	3.75%	5
Labor	175,992	3.69%	4
Meretz	150,793	3.16%	0
Balad	138,617	2.91%	0

Final results of the Central Elections Committee, November 9, 2022, as transcribed by Wikipedia (the committee's own site refused automated access). Registered voters 6,788,804; votes cast 4,794,593; turnout 70.63%. The Netanyahu bloc (Likud, Religious Zionism-Otzma, Shas, and UTJ) won 64 seats with 48.4% of the vote; Meretz and Balad left 289,410 votes below the threshold.

Date	Outlet and pollster	Fieldwork; sample; margin	Yashar	Likud	Together	Outgoing coalition	Zionist opposition	Arab lists	Others
Oct 15	Zman Yisrael (Times of Israel) / Tatika Research	Oct 14-15; 500; 4.4%	26	20	11	49	54	13	Reservists 4
Oct 16	Maariv / Lazar Research	Not reported	21	18	13	47	51	14	Amcha Yisrael 4; Reservists 4
Oct 18	Kan / Kantar	Not reported	23	21	12	51	52	13	Reservists 4
Oct 18	i24NEWS / Direct Polls	Not reported	21	25	13	57	49	14	None
Oct 19	Channel 12 / Midgam with iPanel	Not reported; 507; 4.4%	24	21	14	51	55	14	None
Oct 20	Walla / Panel4All	Oct 19; 601; 4%	23	19	14	48	54	14	Reservists 4
Oct 20	Channel 14	Not reported	20	30	9	62	44	14	None

Seats out of 120. The outgoing coalition's five parties are Likud, Shas, UTJ, Religious Zionism-Zehut, and Otzma Yehudit; the Zionist opposition is Yashar, Together, the Democrats, and Yisrael Beytenu (sums by the course). Where a pollster or sample is not given, the reports found did not include it; the pollsters named for October 16 and 18 are those the outlets used earlier in October. In these polls the five parties won 47 to 62 seats; outside Channel 14 and i24NEWS, 47 to 51. Channel 13's poll of October 19 is omitted because its published figures sum to 121 seats.

Worked example — The Coalition Math of October 27

Take the October polls as a range, not a forecast, and run the arithmetic every party leader runs. The five parties of the outgoing coalition hold 47-51 seats in most polls, short of a majority. Amcha Yisrael, Ofer Winter's new right-wing list, polls below the threshold in most of the latest surveys, and on October 21 Winter refused pressure from the Likud and Smotrich to withdraw. The Zionist opposition holds 51-55 seats, also short, and needs a partner; on October 21 Eisenkot and Liberman jointly urged voters to back only opposition lists sure to cross the threshold. The Reservists-Economic Party of Yoaz Hendel and Yaron Zelekha, at or just below the threshold, counts itself in neither bloc, and Hendel makes a universal draft law his condition for joining any government. Shas, which could bridge the camps, says it will join no government that does not regulate the yeshiva students' status, a demand most of the opposition rejects (Module 5). The Arab lists, at 13-14 seats, could support a government from outside or join one, as Ra'am did in 2021, but most Jewish parties rule that out. Four exits follow: a narrow victory for either bloc on a small party's votes, a unity government across the blocs, a narrow government resting on Arab support, or deadlock and another election. Menachem Lazar, Maariv's pollster, says the outcome turns on 'the two small parties hovering above and below the electoral threshold'.

Module 3 Key Points

The Political System

• Pure nationwide proportional representation with a 3.25% threshold means no party has ever won a majority; the smallest partner holds a veto.

• Basic Laws pass by bare majority, so the Supreme Court has been the only check; a fourteenth, on Torah study, passed in July 2026.

• The overhaul resumed after October 7: a law reshaping judicial selection takes effect with the next Knesset unless the court strikes it down.

• In 2022 the Netanyahu bloc won 64 seats on 70.6% turnout; in October 2026 most polls give its five parties 47-51.

• Both blocs poll short of 61, so small parties near the threshold, Shas's draft demand, and the Arab lists decide the exits.

Module 3 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What did the Supreme Court do on January 1, 2024?

A) It struck down the reasonableness amendment, 8-7
B) It upheld the amendment by one vote
C) It ordered the whole overhaul put to a national referendum
D) It barred the Knesset from passing Basic Laws

2. When does the March 2025 law on judicial selection take effect?

A) At once, by its own terms
B) Only after a referendum
C) With the next Knesset
D) In 2028, when the Supreme Court's president retires at seventy

3. What did the Supreme Court do on October 2, 2026 about the Arab lists?

A) It upheld the ban on Ra'am alone
B) It reinstated both lists unanimously
C) It postponed the election in the Arab towns to November
D) It ordered the two lists to merge so that both would clear the threshold

4. How many seats do most October polls give the outgoing coalition's five parties?

A) Exactly 61 in every poll
B) About 64, as in 2022
C) Between 55 and 58, with Channel 14 the lowest of all the polls
D) Between 47 and 51, short of a majority

5. What did the Netanyahu bloc win in the 2022 election?

A) 64 seats
B) 61 seats, the narrowest majority possible
C) 56 seats, short of a majority
D) 70 seats, counting Yisrael Beytenu

Module 4 — Netanyahu and the Right

The Man, the Trial, the Coalition, and the Opposition

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Anshel Pfeffer, *Bibi: The Turbulent Life and Times of Benjamin Netanyahu* (2018)

Reference: The indictment in Cases 1000, 2000, and 4000 (Israel's Ministry of Justice, November 2019), and the Knesset's record of the 25th Knesset's votes

4a. The Man

Benjamin Netanyahu has been prime minister for about 19 years in all, and the era is defined by him. The biography is the message. He is the son of a historian of the Revisionist Zionist right who taught that Jewish history is a chronicle of catastrophes insufficiently foreseen, and the brother of Yoni, the officer killed leading the Entebbe rescue of 1976. He served as a commando, studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was ambassador to the UN, and became one of the most fluent advocates in English that Israel has produced.

His worldview has been consistent for four decades: the Palestinians will not concede what Israel cannot survive conceding, strength and deterrence buy time, and Iran is the threat that matters. His method has been equally consistent: tactical mastery, coalition arithmetic, the outflanking of rivals, and survival as a strategy. His supporters credit him with the technology boom, the Abraham Accords, and the campaigns against Iran. His critics, among them former chiefs of his own security services, ask whether his interests and the state's have remained distinguishable, with the trial, the coalition, and the inquiry in question.

4b. The Trial

Netanyahu was indicted in November 2019 and is the first sitting prime minister to stand trial. Case 1000 charges fraud and breach of trust for accepting expensive gifts, mainly cigars and champagne, from wealthy benefactors while acting in their interests. Case 2000 charges the same over talks with the publisher of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on favorable coverage in exchange for legislation against a rival paper. Case 4000, the gravest, charges bribery: regulatory benefits for the controlling shareholder of the telecommunications company Bezeq in exchange for favorable coverage on its Walla news site.

His defense is that gifts between friends are not crimes, that seeking better coverage is politics rather than bribery, and that the prosecution is a political trial; that argument has organized his camp's politics since the indictment. His own testimony ended on June 24, 2026, after 98 hearings, with the words 'I am finishing after 10 years of hell'. On June 29 the judges suggested, as they first had in 2023, that the prosecution consider dropping the bribery count in Case 4000 while keeping breach of trust. The prosecution has not withdrawn it.

The defense is now calling its other witnesses, five days a week since October 4, in the Jerusalem District Court. Among them is Avichai Mandelblit, the attorney general who indicted Netanyahu, who testified on October 11 that he had approved the police's principal investigative actions but not every step they took. Netanyahu said, 'The truth is coming out,' and the Likud demanded that the trial be halted. No verdict will come before the election: the defense has warned that the bribery count could keep the trial going into 2028, the year the presiding judge, Rivka Friedman-Feldman, is expected to retire (Module 13). Netanyahu answered the judges' suggestion on July 1 with a renewed call for judicial reform: 'People want a fair judicial system.'

A pardon would end the case, and it is pending. His lawyers asked President Herzog for one on November 30, 2025, after President Trump had called for it in the Knesset in October; in a letter in November Trump wrote, 'I hereby call on you to fully pardon Benjamin Netanyahu.' On April 26, 2026 Herzog deferred the request, saying he wanted to 'exhaust a process that could lead to the formation of an agreement between the parties, outside the walls of the court'. The attorney general accepted plea talks in early May, and Netanyahu let Herzog's deadline pass without answering.

4c. The Coalition of 2022-26

The government sworn in after the 2022 election was the most right-wing and religious in the state's history: the Likud, the two Haredi parties, and a far right that earlier Likud leaders had kept from power. Its agreements promised the judicial overhaul, settlement expansion with Bezalel Smotrich given a minister's authority over the West Bank's civil affairs, and the Haredi parties' budgets and a law exempting yeshiva students from the draft.

It survived October 7, the wars on every front, and the diplomatic ruptures of Module 12, but it never delivered the exemption law. With the courts ordering conscription and the army short of soldiers (Module 5), UTJ left the coalition in July 2025, and Shas's ministers resigned the same month while the party stayed in. On May 12, 2026 Degel HaTorah's spiritual leader, Rabbi Dov Lando, ordered dissolution: 'We no longer have any trust in Netanyahu.' A dissolution bill passed its first reading on June 2, 106-0.

The coalition then controlled the timing. The Knesset kept the election on the date set by law (Module 13), and on July 17, 2026 it ended its term by 62 votes to none, a week before the term would have lapsed. The government had served the first full four-year term since 1988. In its last week it passed the Basic Law on Torah study (Module 3), a law freezing arrests of yeshiva students who evade the draft, which the High Court later struck down (Module 5), the law splitting the attorney general's office, and a law on media regulation, 53-48.

4d. The Far Right and the Haredi Parties

- **Religious Zionism (Smotrich)**, running with Moshe Feiglin's Zehut. The ideological settler right, annexationist by conviction: as finance minister and minister in the Defense Ministry, Smotrich turned the conviction into budgets, legalized outposts, and civilian control of West Bank planning (Module 8).
- **Otzma Yehudit (Ben-Gvir).** The heirs of Meir Kahane's movement in ministerial office. Ben-Gvir, convicted in 2007 of incitement to racism and support for a terrorist organization, has loosened gun licensing, been accused by critics of steering the police toward his politics, and made repeated visits to the Temple Mount. He briefly left the government over the January 2025 ceasefire, and on October 1, 2026 the elections committee's chairman fined him NIS 10,000 over a video in which he told a Hamas prisoner 'I want to kill you'.
- **Shas (Deri).** The Mizrahi Haredi party, part political machine and part religious revival, historically the flexible partner of both camps. The Supreme Court voided Aryeh Deri's appointment as a minister in January 2023 because of his convictions. Deri said on October 14: 'There will be no government in Israel with Shas's support or participation unless the status of yeshiva students is regulated.'
- **United Torah Judaism.** The Ashkenazi Haredi alliance of Degel HaTorah and Agudat Yisrael, the draft law's most absolute constituency, now led by Yaakov Asher. Asher says UTJ 'will not enter a government that does not actually pass the law regulating the status of yeshiva students'.

• **Amcha Yisrael (Winter).** A new list launched on August 25, 2026 by Ofer Winter, a former brigadier general, polling at or just below the threshold (Module 3).

• **The bloc's logic.** Netanyahu needs all of them to rule and cannot satisfy the Haredi parties without the army, the courts, and much of his own electorate rebelling; the far right needs him for legitimacy and leverage; the Haredi parties need whoever will pass an exemption. Every opposition scenario begins by prying one of them loose.

4e. The Opposition and the Polls

The opposition's story of 2026 is Gadi Eisenkot's rise. A former chief of staff, a critic of the government's conduct on October 7, and a father whose son was killed in the war, he left Benny Gantz's National Unity in June 2025 and then founded Yashar! as his own list. In October his list leads the Likud in most polls (3e), and on October 21 he vowed not to serve in a government that Netanyahu leads, even under a rotation. Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid, the partners of 2021, merged their lists as Together on April 26, 2026, under Bennett, promising a 'Zionist government'.

Around them run Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beytenu, secular and hawkish, which campaigns against the Haredi exemptions and which the Likud member Dan Illouz joined in August; Yair Golan's Democrats on the left; and the Reservists-Economic Party of Yoaz Hendel and Yaron Zelekha. Benny Gantz, who broke with the opposition's frame in January 2026 by calling for a shift from 'anybody but Bibi' to 'anybody but extremists', has left the race (Module 3).

The polls frame a paradox. Netanyahu still leads as the preferred prime minister, with 38% to Eisenkot's 24% and Bennett's 14% in Maariv's poll of October 9. Yet Eisenkot leads him head to head, 46% to 40%, and Bennett also leads him, 44% to 42%. In the same poll 59% opposed an Arab party in the next coalition and 53% supported a Haredi one. Kan found on October 11 that 21% of voters were considering staying home, which makes this a contest of turnout as much as persuasion. Netanyahu said on October 18: 'I am not certain of my victory, and I am very worried.' The same day Trump gave him his 'complete and total endorsement', calling him 'a Great Warrior Prime Minister'.

Module 4 Key Points

Netanyahu and the Right

• Netanyahu has governed for about 19 years in all, with one worldview, strength and Iran first, and one method, survival.

• His testimony ended in June 2026 after 98 hearings; the judges suggested dropping the bribery count, and no verdict comes before the vote.

• Herzog deferred Netanyahu's pardon request in April 2026 and called for plea talks; the request is still pending.

• The 2022-26 government served the first full term since 1988; the Haredi parties left over the draft but could not move the date.

• Eisenkot's Yashar! leads most polls and beats Netanyahu head to head, though Netanyahu remains the most preferred prime minister.

Module 4 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What did the judges in Netanyahu's trial suggest on June 29, 2026?

A) That the trial be suspended until after the October election
B) That Cases 1000 and 2000 be merged
C) That the prosecution consider dropping the bribery count in Case 4000 while keeping breach of trust
D) That Netanyahu accept a plea deal within thirty days

2. What did President Herzog do with Netanyahu's pardon request in April 2026?

A) He granted it in full
B) He deferred it
C) He rejected it outright and closed the file for good
D) He referred it to the Knesset's Constitution Committee for a vote

3. How did the 2022-26 Knesset end its term?

A) By a 62-0 vote on July 17, 2026
B) By losing a confidence vote
C) By failing to pass the 2026 budget on time
D) By the president's dissolution after UTJ's resignation

4. What condition did Shas's leader set on October 14 for joining a government?

A) That the Interior Ministry return to the party
B) That Netanyahu remain prime minister
C) That the status of yeshiva students be regulated
D) That the next government drop the judicial overhaul and repeal the selection law

5. What paradox do the October polls show?

A) Netanyahu loses every comparison, yet his bloc polls a majority
B) Turnout intentions are the lowest on record
C) The Arab lists poll first among Jewish voters
D) Netanyahu leads as preferred prime minister, yet Eisenkot beats him head to head

Module 5 — The Society

The Tribes and the Arithmetic Between Them

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Yossi Klein Halevi, *Like Dreamers: The Story of the Israeli Paratroopers Who Reunited Jerusalem and Divided a Nation* (2013)

Reference: The Israel Democracy Institute's *Statistical Report on Ultra-Orthodox Society in Israel 2025* (Gilad Malach and Lee Cahaner) and the Abraham Initiatives' annual report on violence in Arab society

5a. The Demography That Decides

Haredi women average 6.5 children, down from 7.5 two decades ago, by the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) count for 2021-23. Jewish women as a whole average 3.06 and Muslim women 2.75, by figures the CBS published in 2025, so Arab fertility, once far higher, has fallen below Jewish fertility. The Arab share of the population has held near a fifth for decades and is not the variable Israeli politics once assumed it was.

The Haredim are. The IDI counts 1,452,350, 14.3% of the population, growing about 4.2% a year, with 57% of them under twenty. The CBS projects them at 20% of the country by 2040 and 24.4% by 2050. In 2024-25 Haredi pupils were about 21% of all schoolchildren and 27% of those in Hebrew-language schools, and they are 23.5% of the young men designated for military service, a share the IDI projects at 40% by 2050. The national-religious camp grows nearly as fast and supplies a disproportionate share of the army's combat officers and of the settlements' people. The secular tribe that founded the state is the one shrinking as a share.

5b. The Haredim and the Draft

The arrangement dates to 1948, when David Ben-Gurion exempted about 400 yeshiva students from the army to preserve a world of scholarship the Holocaust had destroyed. It grew by custom into a blanket deferment for tens of thousands, was legislated as the Tal Law in 2002, struck down by the Supreme Court in 2012, and then managed for a decade by not enforcing the law. The war ended that management.

In June 2024 a unanimous panel of nine justices ruled that the government could not refrain from drafting yeshiva students. In November 2025 the court gave it 45 days to adopt an enforcement policy, and the government did not. On April 26, 2026 the court ordered daycare subsidies, after-school subsidies, and discounts for first-time home buyers made conditional on enlistment, noting that more than 79,000 call-up orders since 2024 had produced 2,100 Haredi recruits.

The coalition answered on July 14, 2026 with a law freezing arrests of yeshiva students who evade the draft, passed 58-54. A deputy foreign minister, Sharren Haskel, voted against it and resigned: 'I can no longer stand by.' On September 3 the High Court struck the law down, unanimously on procedure and 8-1 on substance. Deputy President Noam Sohlberg wrote that it 'constitutes clear discrimination in the enforcement of the law, based on sectoral-religious affiliation', and the court counted 73,664 Haredi evaders, of whom 219, or 0.3%, had been arrested.

Enforcement at home has stalled since. A review led by the deputy attorney general, Gil Limon, found on October 6 that 'active enforcement has not happened and arrests have not been made in the recent period'. The army said military police had made 15 attempts at arrests in September, leading to eight. On October

5-6 in Modiin, hundreds of Haredi protesters forced military police to leave without the evader they had come for, and Liberman said the forces withdrew 'as though they were in Jenin, not Modiin'. Arrests continue at the borders: on October 20 more than 40 Haredi men were detained as they landed at Ben Gurion Airport, and Netanyahu called such arrests 'a deliberate attempt' to harm Haredi recruitment.

Those who demand conscription now argue that a burden carried by some and refused by a growing tribe cannot survive a long war. Bennett says, 'I am talking about 0 exemption', and that 'whoever does not serve will not receive a shekel'. Eisenkot's target is 'at least 10,000 haredi recruits in each cycle', with personal sanctions. The attorney general said in August that the rise in enlistment 'is still far from meeting the country's security needs', and the IDI calls for what it terms a new, equitable social contract.

Those who defend the yeshivas hold that Torah study is the community's service to the nation and that conscription assaults a way of life the state promised to protect. Shas and UTJ have made a law regulating the yeshiva students' status their condition for joining any government (Module 4). Natan Rosenblatt, counsel for the Haredi group Emet L'Yaakov, told the court in July that 'the Torah forbids enlistment' without arrangements that let Haredi men serve on their own terms. Moshe Gafni of Degel HaTorah asked of the attorney general: 'Who appointed Baharav-Miara to decide everything in the country according to her agenda?'

The evidence shows enlistment rising from a low base. 4,298 Haredim enlisted in the year to June 2026, up from 2,811, with 22% going to combat units, against an army that says it needs about 12,000 more soldiers a year. The Bank of Israel estimated in December 2025 that drafting 7,500 Haredi men a year would save the economy at least NIS 9 billion a year, 0.4% of GDP, and only 54% of Haredi men are employed, a rate unchanged in a decade.

The course's reading: the courts have settled the law, and the politics have not moved to meet it. Enlistment is rising but covers a fraction of the gap, enforcement depends on a government willing to face the protests, and the demography makes delay more expensive each year. The next coalition's draft law is the clearest test of whether one army can hold the tribes.

5c. The Arab Citizens

The Arab citizens run a large share of the country's pharmacies and a rising share of its medical and technology workforce, and they live in a separate school system, largely separate towns, and a politics that both blocs keep at arm's length. The gaps are measurable. Jewish households' net income was 51% higher than Arab households' in the CBS report of June 2023, and 53% of Arab households were at risk of poverty, against 18% of Jewish ones.

Since 2018 the community's dominant fact has been a homicide epidemic. The Abraham Initiatives counted 252 Arab citizens killed in 2025, the deadliest year on record, 88% of them shot; by August 12, 2026 the year's count had reached 161. Knesset data cited in June 2026 put the share of cases solved at 15% for Arab victims against 65% for Jewish ones. Arab leaders blame police neglect, which they say worsened under Ben-Gvir's ministry; the government blames clan crime and weapons smuggling, and in July 2026 it authorized the Shin Bet to help fight crime in Arab towns, over rights groups' objections.

Politically the community's leverage is potential rather than real: Ra'am's entry into the Bennett-Lapid government of 2021 remains the only precedent. Arab turnout was 53.2% in 2022, after 44.6% in 2021. A survey by Tel Aviv University's Moshe Dayan Center, published in May 2026, expected 53% turnout, rising to 67% if all four Arab parties ran together; three of them now do (Module 3). In the same survey 53.3% described their sense of belonging to the state as strong.

5d. The Other Divides

• **Mizrahi and Ashkenazi.** The founding divide between Jews from Europe and Jews from the Arab and Muslim world, who arrived in the 1950s to transit camps and development towns. Their grievance against the Labor establishment made the Likud's 1977 victory, and the Likud and Shas still draw disproportionately on Mizrahi voters, though intermarriage has blurred the line.

• **The Russian speakers.** About a million of the 1.68 million immigrants who have arrived since 1990 came from the former Soviet Union: largely secular and educated, and the base of Yisrael Beytenu. Many are not Jewish under religious law, the source of disputes with the rabbinate over marriage and conversion.

• **The Ethiopians.** About 170,000, airlifted in 1984 and 1991 and arriving since, with the sharpest complaints of discrimination against the police and the schools, and a young generation now visible in the army, the Knesset, and the culture.

• **The settlers.** Ideological, Haredi, and suburban, the distinction that matters for any future partition (Module 8).

• **Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.** The metaphor the country uses for itself: a secular, expensive, globally connected coastal city against a religious, poorer, divided capital. The Tel Aviv area produces much of the country's output and filled the protests of 2023; Jerusalem supplies the coalition.

The quietest number of the war years is emigration. The balance of people arriving and leaving was negative by about 26,000 in 2024 and 20,000 in 2025, and by about 8,000 in the year to September 2026, when about 57,000 Israelis left and about 49,000 people arrived or returned. It is not unprecedented; the Taub Center counts 2025 as the fifth negative year since 2000. A Tel Aviv University study of August 2026 found departures of three months or more running at about 90,000 a year in 2023-25, against about 60,000 in 2010-19, rising among doctors, engineers, and academics. Itai Ater, one of its authors, called the numbers 'very troubling' but said they 'do not yet pose a risk to Israel's resilience'.

Tribe	Share and trajectory	The fault line
Secular Jews	Shrinking as a share of Jewish adults	Carry most of the reserves and the tax base; filled the 2023 protests; the emigration risk
Traditional (*masorti*) Jews	Stable as a share of Jewish adults	The swing tribe: largely Mizrahi, Likud-leaning, observant in part
Religious (national-religious) Jews	Growing as a share of Jewish adults	The officer corps, the settlements, the ideological right
Haredim	The fastest-growing tribe, by the projections in 5a	The draft, the labor market, and the curriculum of the schools
Arab citizens	A stable share of the population (Module 1)	Citizenship without partnership; the homicide epidemic; the coalition question no bloc will answer

CBS (the population, September 2026); IDI (2025). The Haredi share is of the whole population, children included, not of Jewish adults.

Module 5 Key Points

The Society

• Haredi women average 6.5 children; the Haredim, 14.3% of Israelis, are projected at 24% by 2050, and Arab fertility is now below Jewish.

• The High Court struck down the arrest freeze on September 3; it counted 73,664 Haredi evaders and 219 arrests.

• Haredi enlistment rose to 4,298 in the year to June 2026, against an army that needs about 12,000 more soldiers a year.

• Arab society suffered a record 252 homicides in 2025; Knesset data put cases solved at about 15%, against 65% for Jewish victims.

• Emigration exceeded arrivals in 2024 and 2025, with departures of three months or more near 90,000 a year.

Module 5 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What did the High Court do on September 3, 2026?

A) It struck down the law freezing arrests of draft evaders
B) It upheld a new exemption law as a valid amendment to a Basic Law
C) It ordered every yeshiva closed until its students reported for service
D) It ended reserve duty

2. How many Haredim enlisted in the year to June 2026?

A) About 12,000, the army's target
B) About 400, as in 1948
C) About 1,200, down by half after the protests
D) 4,298, up from 2,811 a year earlier

3. What does the course's reading say about the draft?

A) The arrests have closed the gap between need and enlistment
B) The courts have settled the law, but the politics have not moved to meet it
C) The Haredi parties have accepted conscription
D) The army no longer needs more soldiers

4. How does Arab fertility in Israel now compare with Jewish fertility?

A) It is twice as high
B) It is exactly the same, at three children per woman
C) It is lower
D) It is higher among Christians than among Muslims or Druze

5. What happened to Israel's migration balance in 2024 and 2025?

A) It was negative for the first time in the state's history
B) It was negative, by about 26,000 and 20,000
C) It doubled as Jews fled antisemitism in Europe
D) It was suspended by wartime border rules

Module 6 — The Security State

The Army, the Agencies, the Doctrine, and the Failure

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Ronen Bergman, *Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations* (2018)

Reference: The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database (April 2026), the Defense Ministry's export report (June 2, 2026), and the IDF's published investigations of October 7

6a. A Nation in Arms

Israel's defense rests on conscription and a mass reserve. Men serve 32 months, a length the Knesset kept by temporary order in July 2026, and women two years, and both then serve in the reserves into middle age. The model's limits are the war's story. Some 300,000 reservists were called up in the first weeks after October 7; in the Iran war of 2026 more than 100,000 served at once, and about 60,000 were still serving in July against a planning level of about 30,000. The December 2025 budget assumed an average of 40,000 a day for 2026, where the army had expected about 60,000.

The money followed the war. SIPRI put Israel's military spending at $48.3 billion in 2025, 7.8% of GDP, down 4.9% as the fighting in Gaza eased. The cabinet set the 2026 defense budget at NIS 112 billion in December 2025, against the army's request of NIS 140 billion; the prime minister raised it by NIS 32 billion before the Knesset passed the budget on March 30. The government agreed another NIS 15 billion on July 2, which was still stuck in the Knesset's Finance Committee in September, and the defense establishment now seeks NIS 183 billion. Treasury officials answered that 'the defense establishment's demands never end'.

The United States supplies about $3.8 billion a year in military aid under the memorandum of 2016-28, $3.3 billion in financing and $500 million for missile defense (Module 12 has its future). The other side of the ledger is exports: defense sales reached a record $19.2 billion in 2025, the fifth record in a row.

The war's cost in Israeli lives, by the official counts of October 2026, is 1,318 security personnel and 1,029 civilians killed since October 7, 2023, among the civilians 88 foreign nationals and 63 people aged 18 or under. Palestinian, Lebanese, and Iranian casualties are in Modules 7, 9, and 10.

6b. The Agencies

- **The IDF.** A single service under the chief of the general staff, Eyal Zamir, appointed after Herzi Halevi resigned over October 7. The air force and the navy changed commanders after the Iran war of 2026.
- **Military Intelligence.** The directorate that owns the national intelligence assessment, the one that failed in 1973 and again in 2023, now headed by Shlomi Binder. Its signals arm, Unit 8200, is the seedbed of the technology industry: its alumni founded Check Point, Wiz, and much of the cybersecurity sector (Module 11).
- **The Mossad.** The foreign intelligence service, reporting to the prime minister and led since June 2, 2026 by Roman Gofman, who succeeded David Barnea. Its reputation rests on the theft of Iran's nuclear archive in 2018, the exploding pagers used against Hezbollah (Module 9), and the teams inside Iran that opened the strikes of June 2025.

• **The Shin Bet.** The domestic security service, responsible for the West Bank, Gaza, and threats inside Israel. Its director, Ronen Bar, accepted responsibility for October 7 and was dismissed by Netanyahu in 2025, a dismissal the Supreme Court ruled unlawful; David Zini now leads it.

• **The missile shield.** Four layers: Iron Dome against rockets; David's Sling against cruise and medium-range missiles; the Arrow 2 and Arrow 3 interceptors, at about $1.5 million and $2 million each, against ballistic missiles; and the Iron Beam laser, in service since December 28, 2025 but limited to drones. American Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) batteries and navy ships joined every large exchange with Iran (Module 10).

• **The undeclared deterrent.** About 90 nuclear warheads by SIPRI's 2026 estimate, never confirmed under the policy of 'ambiguity' adopted with the Dimona reactor in the 1960s.

6c. The Doctrine

Ben-Gurion's security concept, written for a state with no depth and few people, has three legs, deterrence, early warning, and decisive victory, and one premise: that Israel cannot afford long wars, so it must win quickly on the enemy's ground and then rebuild deterrence. Missile defense became a fourth leg, and in the 2010s the concept evolved into a 'campaign between the wars', continuous covert and air action against Iran's network to delay the next war.

October 7 broke every leg at once. Deterrence failed, the warning existed and was dismissed (6d), and the war has run for years without a decisive end. The practice since is the opposite of Ben-Gurion's: a long war on several fronts, the holding of buffer zones in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria (Modules 7 and 9), and preemption of Iran (Module 10). Its cost shows in the army. Zamir warned the cabinet in March 2026, in a speech that leaked, 'I am raising 10 red flags before the IDF collapses into itself', and in August he more than doubled the forces in the West Bank from their pre-war level of about 11 battalions.

6d. The Failure and the Inquiry

The October 7 failure had three layers (Module 2). The army's own investigations, released in early 2025, documented two: intelligence that had Hamas's plan and judged it aspirational, and operations that had thinned the border and took hours to respond. An outside panel under Maj. Gen. (res.) Sami Turgeman reported on November 10, 2025 that most of those probes were incomplete or inadequate, rating 10 green, 9 orange, and 5 red. It named 'a conceptual disconnect about Hamas and Gaza' and listed 'the military-political relationship' among the subjects left largely unexamined. On November 23 the army dismissed three generals who had already resigned, among them the former head of Southern Command.

The third layer, the strategic conception of Hamas held across governments (Module 7), is the one no military probe can reach. That is why the argument over the inquiry is the argument over responsibility. The best-known precedents, the Agranat Commission after 1973 and the Kahan Commission after Sabra and Shatila, were state commissions, whose members the Supreme Court's president appoints and which can subpoena witnesses and name names.

The government rejected a state commission in May 2025. The High Court issued a conditional order in November 2025 and heard the petitions on April 23, 2026. The government's own bill would split the appointments between the coalition and the opposition, let the State Comptroller fill seats the opposition leaves empty, and bar former justices, attorneys general, senior officers, and Shin Bet chiefs; it passed a first reading on July 6, 2026 as the opposition boycotted. On July 22 the government told the court it could

not finish the bill before the election, and on August 19 the attorney general proposed that the decision wait until a new government is formed.

Those who demand a state commission include the attorney general, Gali Baharav-Miara, who has called it 'clearly the most appropriate legal tool', refused to defend the government's position, and wrote that 'the government is causing serious damage to the possibility of reaching the truth regarding the events of October 7'. The bereaved families' October Council said in July that the government's 'sole intention was to deceive everyone and never conduct an investigation'. Dana Blander of the IDI called the government's alternative 'a recipe for burying the truth and politicizing the facts'.

Those who defend the government's design start from the Commissions of Inquiry Law, which leaves the decision to the government. The government told the court in January 2026 that 'the authority in this matter belongs to the government and not to any other entity' and that a court-ordered inquiry 'would tear apart the principle of separation of powers'. Netanyahu argues that a commission appointed by the judiciary would be biased against his government and that any inquiry should examine the years before October 7, including the protests of 2023 and the decisions of the courts.

The evidence includes the public's view: 74% supported a state commission in an IDI survey of September 2025, and in December 2025, 55% chose one as most suitable against 22% for a commission the government appoints. Zamir accepted the army's responsibility and called for a 'systemic investigation' without endorsing a state commission. The government's lawyer in the case, Michael Rabello, was elected State Comptroller in June 2026, the official its bill would empower to fill the opposition's seats.

The course's reading: the inquiry has become a test of the system's oldest mechanism of accountability. The government's design gives the politicians whose decisions are at issue a hand in choosing their investigators, while a state commission would leave the choice with a judiciary the coalition is fighting. The next government decides, and the decision will say as much about it as about October 7.

Module 6 Key Points

The Security State

• About 300,000 reservists were called up in October 2023; the 2026 budget assumed 40,000 a day and the Iran war needed far more.

• Military spending was 7.8% of GDP in 2025; the 2026 defense budget rose from NIS 112 billion to about NIS 144 billion.

• New chiefs lead the agencies: Zamir at the IDF, Gofman at the Mossad since June 2026, and Zini at the Shin Bet.

• October 7 broke Ben-Gurion's doctrine of short, decisive wars; the practice since is attrition on several fronts and buffer zones.

• The government refused a state commission; the attorney general backs one but proposed that the next government decide.

Module 6 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. Who has led the Mossad since June 2, 2026?

A) David Barnea, in a second term
B) David Zini, who moved over from the Shin Bet
C) Eyal Zamir, who added the post to his duties as chief of staff
D) Roman Gofman

2. What did Turgeman's outside panel find about the army's own investigations of October 7?

A) That most were incomplete or inadequate, and that the military-political relationship was left largely unexamined
B) That all of them met the standard of a state commission
C) That none had been completed
D) That the intelligence failure was the government's alone

3. What did the attorney general propose on August 19, 2026?

A) That the government's commission bill be passed at once
B) That the army's probes replace any commission
C) That the decision on an inquiry wait for the next government
D) That the High Court appoint a commission itself before the election

4. What happened to the 2026 defense budget between December 2025 and March 2026?

A) It rose from NIS 112 billion to about 144 billion
B) It fell to NIS 90 billion
C) It stayed at NIS 112 billion
D) It doubled to NIS 224 billion, the army's full request

5. Why does the course call the inquiry a test of accountability?

A) No law allows any inquiry into a war
B) The army has refused to testify before any commission of inquiry since 2024
C) The government's design lets those under scrutiny shape the inquiry
D) The Supreme Court has abolished state commissions as unconstitutional

Module 7 — Gaza

The War That Defined the Era

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Gaza: A History* (2014)

Reference: The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) reports on Gaza, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification's (IPC) analyses, the IDF's statements, and the records of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC)

7a. The Strip Before October 7

Gaza is 365 square kilometers, 41 kilometers long and 6 to 12 wide, holding about 2.1 million people, two-thirds of them descendants of the refugees of 1948. Egypt held it until the 1967 war, and Israel then occupied it, settled about 8,000 Israelis there, and withdrew them (Module 2).

Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, was founded in 1987 as the Muslim Brotherhood's Palestinian branch, with a charter committed to Israel's elimination, and it led the suicide bombings of the 1990s and 2000s. It won the Palestinian legislative election of 2006 and took sole control of the strip in 2007. Israel and Egypt then sealed Gaza (Module 2). Israel and its defenders called the blockade necessary containment of an armed enemy firing rockets at its towns; the UN, human rights groups, and Palestinians called it collective punishment of the strip's people, most of whom could not leave.

The rounds of war in 2008-09, 2012, 2014, and 2021 killed some 4,000 Palestinians and about 100 Israelis. The Israeli formula that emerged, 'mowing the grass', treated Hamas as deterrable and, in the years before 2023, as usefully governable, with Qatari cash allowed in each month to keep the strip quiet and the Palestinian leadership divided. Hamas used those years to build the tunnels, the rocket arsenal, and the assault force that the formula assumed it would not use.

7b. The War in Phases

The response to October 7 was the largest campaign in Israel's history. Israel cut off electricity, water, fuel, and food, ordered the 1.1 million residents of the north to move south, and began an air campaign of great intensity against a densely populated area. By the Gaza health ministry's count, more than 7,000 Palestinians had been killed before the ground invasion began. The army found a tunnel network it put at about 500 kilometers, with hostages held inside it and, it said, command posts under hospitals.

The campaign moved south through Khan Younis and then into Rafah, where a million displaced people had fled, an offensive Washington opposed and the ICJ ordered halted, in an order whose scope Israel and several judges read narrowly. Yahya Sinwar, the architect of October 7, was killed by a patrol on October 16, 2024. A ceasefire in January 2025 collapsed when its second phase, a permanent end to the war, had not been negotiated; Israel, which had already stopped all aid (7d), resumed with strikes that killed more than 400 people in a night. The offensives of 2025 took most of the strip, and the strike on Hamas's negotiators in Doha on September 9 produced, within weeks, the plan that ended the active war.

Phase	Dates	What happened
Siege and air campaign	Oct 7-27, 2023	Total siege; the north ordered south; mass air strikes

Phase	Dates	What happened
Invasion of the north	Oct 27 - Nov 23, 2023	Gaza City encircled; the tunnels found; the raid on the al-Shifa hospital
The first truce	Nov 24 - Dec 1, 2023	Hostages freed for 240 prisoners (7c); the only pause for fourteen months
Khan Younis and the south	Dec 2023 - Apr 2024	Four months of fighting in the south; the ICJ's first orders, in January
Rafah	May - Jul 2024	The offensive Washington opposed; the Philadelphi corridor on the Egyptian border seized
Al-Mawasi, the northern siege, Sinwar	Jul - Nov 2024	The 'humanitarian zone' struck; Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh killed; Jabalia besieged; Sinwar killed
The January ceasefire	Jan 19 - Mar 17, 2025	Hostages for about 1,900 prisoners (7c); the second phase never negotiated
Resumption and 'Gideon's Chariots'	Mar 18 - Aug 2025	Most of the strip taken; the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation's aid system; famine confirmed in Gaza City
Gaza City	Aug 20 - Oct 2, 2025	The last offensive; hundreds of thousands displaced south; the Doha strike
The October ceasefire	From Oct 10, 2025	Every living hostage home; the yellow line; disarmament and withdrawal unresolved (7h)

Phase boundaries follow the standard timelines; dates are those of the operations' announced starts.

7c. The Hostages

The hostages taken on October 7 (Module 2), soldiers and civilians, children and the old, Israelis and Thai farm workers, became the war's second front inside Israel. Their families organized within days into a movement that held the square outside Tel Aviv's art museum for two years. Their argument, that the state's first duty was to the people it had failed to protect, met the government's, that only military pressure would free them and that a deal on Hamas's terms would reward October 7.

The record fell between. 105 came out in the truce of November 2023, most of them women and children. A few were rescued by force, four of them at Nuseirat in June 2024 in an operation that killed more than 270 Palestinians by the ministry's count. Three were shot by Israeli soldiers while waving a white flag, and in August 2024 six were found executed in a tunnel, which brought a general strike. The January 2025 deal freed 33, 25 of them alive. The October 2025 deal freed all 20 living hostages within three days, for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees, and the remains of the dead came back over the following months, the last, Ran Gvili's, on January 26, 2026.

7d. The Aid Fight

No question in the war was fought harder than how much food, water, fuel, and medicine reached a population that could not leave. The siege of the first weeks was total by declaration. The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which ran Gaza's schools and clinics and much of its aid, was accused by Israel of employing participants in October 7; a UN inquiry found that nine staff members may have been involved, and an Israeli law of October 2024 banned the agency from operating. The IPC's monitors warned of imminent famine in the north in 2024 and confirmed famine in Gaza City in August 2025.

Israel imposed an eleven-week blockade on March 2, 2025, saying it would force the hostages' release. It was followed by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), a private operation backed by the United States, with distribution sites in zones the army controlled, designed to replace the UN system and, its backers said,

to keep aid from Hamas. By August 2025 more than a thousand people had been killed seeking food, most of them near the sites, by the UN human rights office's count.

The fight continued after the ceasefire, over the counting. The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), the Israeli military body that runs the crossings, reported in April 2026 more than 1.5 million tons of food since the truce, 600 trucks a day on average, and said, 'There is no limit to the amount of aid that can enter Gaza.' OCHA counts UN and partner deliveries at 517 trucks a week since May 24, with commercial traffic of about 800 truckloads a week; by the course's arithmetic the two together come to about 190 a day. Kerem Shalom has been the only working cargo crossing since May 24, and food prices stood 204% above their pre-war level in late September.

7e. The Leadership Strikes

Israel's stated aims were to destroy Hamas's military and governing capacity and to bring the hostages home, and the first aim's clearest measure was the leadership. Mohammed Deif, the military commander, was killed in the strike on al-Mawasi in July 2024 that also killed about 90 people around him. Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader, was killed in a guesthouse of Iran's Revolutionary Guards in Tehran on July 31, 2024. After Sinwar's death his brother Mohammed took the military command and was killed in May 2025, and the strike on the negotiators in Doha (7b) missed them, killing a Qatari officer and five junior members.

By the ceasefire nearly every commander of October 7 was dead and the brigades were reduced to cells. Hamas, led from Doha by Khalil al-Hayya, kept its weapons and reasserted control of the part of the strip Israel did not hold, executing rivals in the streets. On July 6, 2026 it formally dissolved its emergency government, a step the foreign minister, Gideon Sa'ar, called a 'trick'. Israel-backed militias, such as Hussam al-Astal's in Khan Younis, now fight Hamas inside the strip.

7f. The Numbers, and the Dispute Over Them

The Gaza health ministry, run by Hamas's administration, had counted 74,498 Palestinians killed by October 22, 2026, at least 1,538 of them since the ceasefire, and 175,616 wounded. The UN, the World Health Organization, and most researchers have treated its counts as broadly reliable through every war, and Israel has largely stopped disputing the total. On January 29, 2026 a senior IDF official told reporters that the army believes the ministry's toll is 'largely accurate', putting the deaths at around 70,000 excluding bodies under the rubble.

The dispute is now over who the dead were and how they died. The ministry does not separate fighters from civilians. The IDF says it has killed more than 24,000 combatants in Gaza, a figure it has not documented by name, and its officials estimate 'two to three civilians killed for every dead terror operative'. Israel rejects the ministry's deaths from malnutrition as 'manipulated by Hamas to include individuals with underlying severe health issues'. Researchers argue the other way: a study in *The Lancet* in January 2025 estimated that the ministry had under-reported traumatic deaths to mid-2024 by about 41%.

The course's reading: it cites the ministry's figure as the reported toll and the IDF's combatant figure as the army's claim. Taken together they put civilians at about two-thirds of the dead, and the IDF's own ratio implies 67-75%; if the toll is undercounted, the share is higher. No independent body has been allowed to count.

7g. The Cases on the War's Conduct

Israel's case. October 7 was the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust (Module 2), by an organization whose charter and conduct seek Israel's destruction and which built its military infrastructure beneath and inside the population it governs, in hospitals, schools, and mosques, while holding hostages among them. Israel's government argues that it warned civilians before strikes, designated evacuation zones, and let aid in at growing volumes; that the civilian toll is Hamas's strategy; and that the law that protects civilians holds responsible the side that hides among them. Its foreign ministry said in May 2026 that South Africa's genocide case 'was never about the facts' but 'a propaganda campaign by South Africa in the service of Hamas, masquerading as a legal process'.

The Palestinian and critics' case. The response was directed, by design or indifference, at Gaza as a whole. Its critics cite a siege that cut food, water, and fuel to the whole strip, and the bombing of dense neighborhoods, hospitals, and shelters. They cite evacuation orders to zones that were then struck, the displacement of nearly the entire population, famine, and the destruction of housing, health, water, and schooling. A UN commission of inquiry found that Israel had committed genocide (7i), citing statements by Israeli leaders as evidence of intent. South Africa's presidency answered Israel in June 2026 that 'self-defence is not a defence to genocide, there is none'.

The evidence on each point is in this module: the toll (7f), the disputed aid volumes and the famine confirmed in Gaza City (7d). The IPC's analysis of July 2026 found no famine but 59% of Gazans in acute food insecurity, projected to rise to 67% by December. The destruction came to 371,888 homes damaged or destroyed and $71.4 billion in needs over a decade, by the assessment the European Union, the UN, and the World Bank published in April 2026.

The course's reading: the record establishes a civilian toll, destruction, and hunger without precedent in Israel's wars, including the famine in Gaza City (7d). It also establishes an enemy that fought from within the population and held hostages there. Whether the conduct meets the legal definition of genocide turns on intent, which the ICJ will decide after its written phase ends (7i), and the course does not anticipate that ruling.

7h. The Ceasefire and the Day After

The October ceasefire (7b) was the first phase of the 20-point plan President Trump announced with Netanyahu's assent and the endorsement of Arab and Muslim states. It brought the hostages home, but its other pillars have moved slowly or not at all. Israel withdrew to a 'yellow line' that left it about 53% of the strip, and the line has since moved outward. Netanyahu said on May 28, 2026, 'we are fully in control of 60 percent of the territory', and directed the army to reach 70%; in late September OCHA counted restrictions on 65% of Gaza's land. The fighting never fully stopped: five Israeli soldiers have been killed since the ceasefire.

The governance plan came in stages. UN Security Council Resolution 2803 of November 17, 2025 authorized an International Stabilization Force (ISF), 13-0 with China and Russia abstaining. Trump then formed the Board of Peace, chaired by himself, to supervise a technocratic National Committee for the Administration of Gaza under Ali Shaath. Neither the committee nor the force has entered Gaza: the committee works from Cairo, and the force, under an American general, Jasper Jeffers, with pledged troops from Indonesia, Morocco, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, and Albania, is to deploy only after a phased Israeli withdrawal. Donors pledged about $17 billion in February, and the board proposed a first six-month plan of $2.45 billion in September.

Everything waits on the sequence of disarmament and withdrawal. On July 30, 2026 Trump announced that the Board of Peace had reached an agreement for Hamas's complete disarmament, in phases, adding that 'as disarmament is completed, Israeli forces will withdraw'. Netanyahu's office said the published version 'does not reflect Israel's positions', and on August 4 the board stated that withdrawal beyond the yellow line 'will take place only once decommissioning is complete'. Hamas officials answered that the statement 'focused solely on the issue of weapons and failed to address the occupation's obligations', and Hamas says it will implement nothing until Israel does its part. By the ceasefire's anniversary disarmament had not begun.

7i. The Courts

Forum	Case	Status (October 2026)
The ICJ	South Africa v. Israel under the Genocide Convention, filed December 2023	Three orders of provisional measures in 2024 bind Israel. Israel filed its counter-memorial, contesting jurisdiction and admissibility, in March 2026. The court's order of May 21, 2026 set South Africa's reply for November 22, 2027 and Israel's rejoinder for May 22, 2029, so hearings and a judgment come later. Israel rejects the case as baseless
The ICC	Arrest warrants of November 2024 for Netanyahu and the former defense minister Yoav Gallant, for starvation as a method of warfare and crimes against humanity; warrants sought for three Hamas leaders, all since killed	Outstanding. Israel and the United States reject the court's authority, and the United States sanctioned its officials in 2025. A warrant is an accusation, not a finding of guilt
The UN commission of inquiry	The Human Rights Council's standing commission on the occupied territories	Found in September 2025 that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza; Israel rejects the commission as biased
Israeli courts and military justice	Petitions on aid and detention; the military advocate general's investigations	Five reservists indicted in February 2025 over the abuse of a detainee at Sde Teiman had the charges dropped in March 2026. The former military advocate general resigned in October 2025 over a leaked video of the case and was arrested

The ICJ's order of May 21, 2026; South Africa's presidency (June 2, 2026); UN records. The ICJ decides the responsibility of states and the ICC the guilt of individuals; neither has reached a judgment on the merits.

Module 7 Key Points

Gaza

• Gaza's 2.1 million people lived under Hamas from 2007 and a blockade, under a conception that Hamas was contained.

• The war ran two years in phases; every living hostage came home in October 2025, and the last remains in January 2026.

• The ministry counts 74,498 killed; the IDF calls the toll largely accurate and claims more than 24,000 combatants among them.

• Both cases stand on the record: an enemy embedded in its civilians, or siege, famine, and destruction as policy; intent awaits the ICJ.

• The ceasefire stalled on sequence: Hamas will not disarm first, and Israel, now holding 60-70% of Gaza, will not withdraw first.

Module 7 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What did a senior IDF official say about the Gaza health ministry's toll in January 2026?

A) That it is inflated by half and cannot be used at all
B) That it is largely accurate, at around 70,000 deaths excluding bodies under the rubble
C) That the army had stopped counting
D) That the UN had produced its own count

2. When were the remains of the last hostage, Ran Gvili, returned?

A) October 13, 2025, with the living
B) March 18, 2025, as the first ceasefire collapsed
C) They have not been returned
D) January 26, 2026

3. Which crossing has been Gaza's only working cargo crossing since May 24, 2026?

A) Rafah, under European monitors
B) Kerem Shalom
C) Zikim, in the north of the strip
D) Allenby, through Jordan and the West Bank

4. What does the Board of Peace's statement of August 4, 2026 say about withdrawal?

A) It comes before any disarmament begins
B) It is to be complete by the end of 2026, whatever Hamas does
C) It comes only once decommissioning is complete
D) It is a matter for the UN Security Council alone to decide

5. What does the course's reading say the genocide question turns on?

A) Intent, which the ICJ will decide after 2029
B) The number of trucks that crossed each day
C) Whether Hamas signed the ceasefire
D) The vote of the UN General Assembly in September 2025

Module 8 — The West Bank and Jerusalem

Where the Conflict's Future Is Decided

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Gershom Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967-1977* (2006)

Reference: OCHA's West Bank data (settler attacks, demolitions, displacement), Peace Now's Settlement Watch, and the ICJ's advisory opinion of July 19, 2024 on the occupation

8a. The Territory and Its Two Populations

The West Bank is about 5,600 square kilometers of hill country between the Green Line and the Jordan River, held by Israel since 1967 and never annexed, except for East Jerusalem. About 3 million Palestinians live in it under a patchwork that the Oslo Accords created in 1995 as a five-year interim arrangement; it has lasted three decades.

Area A, 18% of the land, holds the cities and is under the PA's civil and security control. Area B, 22%, holds most villages and is under Palestinian civil and Israeli security control. Area C, 60%, holds the countryside, the Jordan Valley, and every settlement, and is under full Israeli control. Palestinians there rarely obtain building permits: of the 2,702 Palestinian structures OCHA counted as demolished in the West Bank from January 2025 to August 2026, 94% were demolished for lack of one.

About 500,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank and about 230,000 in the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem that Israel annexed, by Peace Now's counts. They are of three kinds: ideological settlers in the hills, Haredi families in two large towns near the Green Line, Modiin Illit and Beitar Illit, and commuters who moved for cheaper housing. Most of the second and third kinds live in blocs that most partition proposals since 2000 have left to Israel in exchange for land elsewhere.

Two legal systems operate on the same ground: Israeli civil law for settlers and military law for Palestinians. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Israeli group B'Tselem call the result apartheid. Israel's government and its defenders reject the charge: in their view the dual system is the ordinary condition of a military occupation, one the Palestinians could have ended by accepting the offers of 2000 and 2008.

8b. The Palestinian Authority

The authority that Oslo created runs the cities' schools, clinics, and police and pays tens of thousands of public salaries. Its security forces coordinate with Israel's against Hamas, a cooperation much of its public resents. Its budget depends on tax revenues that Israel collects on its behalf, and Israel has withheld a growing share of them. Its legislature has not met since 2007, and the succession has a designated interim heir, Hussein al-Sheikh, but no elected one.

Under pressure from its foreign backers, Abbas set a legislative election for November 28, 2026, the first since the one Hamas won (Module 7), under a new law requiring candidates to accept the PLO's program, which recognizes Israel. Hamas said it would run inside a broad coalition, and in late September a senior Islamic Jihad official announced 'a unified national list' with Hamas and Mohammed Dahlan, a former Fatah security chief exiled after a falling-out with Abbas in 2010.

On October 10 Abbas postponed the vote to September 2027, to be held with a presidential election (Module 13). He cited Israeli restrictions on election materials, observers, and candidates in Gaza and East Jerusalem. Critics on both sides were scathing: Sa'ar accused him of 'fooling the international community', and Mustafa Barghouti, a Palestinian opposition leader, called two decades without elections 'totally unacceptable'.

The northern cities have become a front of their own. Israel's Operation Iron Wall, begun in January 2025 in Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nur Shams, emptied the refugee camps, and more than 33,000 of their refugees were still displaced in July 2026. The PA's health ministry counts more than 1,100 Palestinians killed in the West Bank by Israeli forces or settlers since October 2023. OCHA counts 322 killed from January 2025 to August 2026, 74 of them children; the army says most of those killed were gunmen in exchanges of fire, rioters, or attackers. Palestinian attacks in Israel and the West Bank have killed 67 Israeli civilians and security personnel since October 7, 2023.

8c. Settlement, Violence, and the Annexation Question

The government of 2022-26 transformed the West Bank's administration and map. Smotrich, as the minister in the Defense Ministry responsible for civil affairs, moved planning from military to civilian hands and legalized outposts. In February 2026 the security cabinet decided to publish the West Bank's land registry and revive a committee to acquire land for the state. In March it secretly decided to establish 34 new settlements.

By July Peace Now counted 104 settlements approved by the government: 16 former neighborhoods of existing settlements given independent status, 50 outposts to be legalized, and 38 entirely new. The group said that 'the government has gone into overdrive ahead of the elections, racing to create as many facts on the ground as possible'. In August Kadim became the last of the northern West Bank settlements evacuated in 2005 (Module 2) to be re-established.

The sharpest case is E1, a corridor east of Jerusalem planned since the 1990s and long frozen under American pressure, because building there would cut the West Bank's north from its south and both from East Jerusalem. The plan was approved in August 2025, when Smotrich said, 'This reality definitively buries the idea of a Palestinian state.' Bidding on the first 1,234 of its 3,401 homes ran from August 18 to October 19, 2026, and the rest are to follow (Module 13).

The attorney general has postponed awarding the E1 tenders until after the election, and a petition led by Bedouin residents is pending; an estimated 3,700 Palestinians in 18 communities could be displaced. The State Department repeated on August 21, 2026 that the United States does not support annexation.

Formal annexation has stayed a proposal rather than a policy. The Knesset passed preliminary readings of sovereignty bills on October 22, 2025, and President Trump said Israel would 'lose all of its support' if it annexed. Violence rose with the settlement drive: OCHA's counts of settler attacks causing casualties or damage have risen every year (table), and the olive harvest that began in October brought a new wave, 19 attacks on October 9 alone by a PA monitoring body's count.

Yesh Din, an Israeli rights group, found that 93.6% of investigations into ideologically motivated crimes by Israelis against Palestinians since 2005 ended without an indictment. Netanyahu attributes the violence to 'a small number of delinquents'.

Period	Settler attacks causing casualties or damage	Note
2023	1,291	

Period	Settler attacks causing casualties or damage	Note
2024	1,449	
2025	1,835	17 Palestinians killed in settler attacks
January-August 2026	1,623	18 killed by July 20, one more than in all of 2025
January 2023 - August 2026	—	72 killed in settler attacks (36 by settlers, 19 by Israeli forces, 17 by one or the other); 132 communities displaced, 49 of them entirely

OCHA (July, September, and October 2026); the 2026 total is the course's sum of OCHA's monthly counts. The Israeli government does not publish a comparable count.

8d. Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the conflict in one city of about a million people. Nearly two-fifths are Palestinians, most of them holding Israeli residency but not citizenship, in the eastern half that Israel took in 1967 and in 1980 declared part of its capital, 'complete and united'. No state formally recognizes the annexation of East Jerusalem. The United States recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017 without defining its borders, and a handful of states have embassies there.

The Old City's Temple Mount, or Haram al-Sharif, where the ancient Temples stood and the al-Aqsa mosque, Islam's third holiest site, stands, is governed by a 'status quo': Jordan's religious trust administers it, Muslims pray, and Jews may visit but not pray. Ben-Gvir's visits and public prayers there, the rising number of Jewish visitors, and Hamas's name for October 7, the 'al-Aqsa Flood', show how the site turns local decisions into regional events. The talks of 2000 foundered partly on the city, and the current government holds that it will never be divided.

8e. The Cases, and the Status of the Two-State Idea

The Israeli right's case. Judea and Samaria are the Jewish people's historic heartland, Hebron, Shiloh, and Bethel, and the territory was taken in a defensive war from Jordan, which had no lawful title, so it is disputed rather than occupied. Every withdrawal has brought terror, Gaza most of all, and a Palestinian state in the hills above the main airport would put the country's center in range. There is no partner, the right argues, and the states that recognized Palestine rewarded October 7. Yossi Dagan, a settler leader, said at Kadim's refounding that 'the spirit of settlement and the people of Israel are stronger than any withdrawal', and Sa'ar warned Britain in September that 'measures against Israel will not go unanswered'.

The Palestinian and critics' case. The occupation is unlawful. The ICJ advised on July 19, 2024, by 11 votes to 4, that Israel's continued presence in the occupied territory is unlawful and must end as rapidly as possible, because settlement and annexation violate the ban on acquiring territory by force. Announcing bans on imports of settlement goods on September 8, 2026, the leaders of Britain, France, and Canada declared that 'settlements are illegal under international law'.

Britain's foreign secretary, Ed Miliband, spoke of 'ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in areas of the West Bank, perpetrated by settler terrorists'. Germany's chancellor, Friedrich Merz, said through a spokesman in April that 'there must be no de facto partial annexation of the West Bank'.

The Israeli center's case is neither. Between the river and the sea live roughly equal numbers of Jews and Palestinians, and without a partition Israel becomes either a binational state, and not Jewish, or a state ruling millions without rights, and not democratic. Eisenkot has called E1 a 'mistake'. Yet the center's

exhaustion is the era's political fact: the Knesset voted 68-9 in July 2024 against any Palestinian state, and Gallup's 2025 world poll found about three in ten Israelis, and about three in ten Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, backing two states. No other end state has a majority either.

The evidence runs both ways. On the ground, the settlement drive and the violence described in 8c have advanced. Abroad, 157 of the UN's 193 members recognized Palestine after the wave of September 2025, Washington refuses to support annexation (8c), and the Arab states insist on a path to statehood (Module 12). Between them, the PA has postponed the election that its backers hoped would renew it (8b).

The course's reading: annexation in name has been checked by Washington, but annexation in practice advanced faster under this government than under any before it, and the violence grew with it. The two-state idea survives as diplomacy's reference point, backed far more abroad than by either public at home. The Israeli election will matter more for the pace of settlement and the policing of settler violence than for the end state: no likely coalition proposes either a Palestinian state or formal annexation.

Module 8 Key Points

The West Bank and Jerusalem

• About 3 million Palestinians and 500,000 settlers live under Oslo's three-decade 'interim' and two legal systems; 230,000 more settlers live in East Jerusalem.

• Abbas set the first Palestinian election in twenty years for November 28, then postponed it on October 10 to September 2027.

• The government approved 104 settlements and opened bidding in E1; formal annexation stalled after Trump's warning of October 2025.

• Settler attacks rose every year, from 1,291 in 2023 to 1,835 in 2025, with 1,623 in January-August 2026.

• Three cases: the right's history and security, the critics' international law, and the center's demographic arithmetic.

Module 8 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What share of the West Bank is Area C, and what does it contain?

A) About 18%: the cities, under the PA's full control
B) About 22%: most villages, under mixed control
C) About 40%: the Jordan Valley alone
D) About 60%: every settlement, the Jordan Valley, and the countryside

2. How many settlements had the government approved by July 2026, by Peace Now's count?

A) 34, all decided in March
B) About 150, the number before 2022
C) About 60, all of them legalized outposts
D) 104

3. What did the ICJ advise in July 2024?

A) That the settlements are lawful because Jordan held no title
B) That Israel's continued presence in the occupied territory is unlawful and must end as rapidly as possible
C) That the question is political and outside its competence
D) That the Oslo Accords bind both sides

4. What did Abbas do on October 10, 2026?

A) He postponed the legislative election to September 2027
B) He resigned in favor of al-Sheikh
C) He confirmed the November 28 vote and invited international observers
D) He barred the Hamas-Dahlan list from running under the new election law

5. What is the Israeli center's case on the West Bank, as the course presents it?

A) The territory is disputed, not occupied
B) Settlements are illegal under international law
C) Without partition, Israel becomes binational or undemocratic
D) Israel must hold the hills above its airport, whatever the cost to peace

Module 9 — The Northern Front

Hezbollah, Lebanon, Syria, and the Zones Israel Holds

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Matthew Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God* (2013)

Reference: The Lebanese health ministry's casualty statements, OCHA's Lebanon flash updates, and the Israel-Lebanon framework of June 26, 2026, announced by the State Department

9a. Hezbollah Before October 7

Hezbollah, the Party of God, grew out of the 1982 invasion and Iran's revolution: a Shia militia, political party, and social movement built with the help of Iran's Revolutionary Guards. It claimed Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 as its victory and fought Israel to a standstill in 2006. In the seventeen years of relative quiet that followed, it built an arsenal estimated at 150,000 rockets and missiles, a growing number of them guided, and an elite unit, the Radwan force, trained to raid the Galilee.

It was Iran's forward deterrent, the main reason Israel hesitated to strike Iran's nuclear program, and inside Lebanon a state within the state, able to block governments and the choice of presidents. On October 8, 2023 it opened a 'support front' for Hamas, firing across the border every day. About 60,000 Israelis left their homes in the north and began returning only after the ceasefire that ended the 2024 war (9b).

9b. The 2024 War and the Return of the Lebanese State

Israel turned the war of attrition into a decisive campaign in September 2024. Pagers and radios carried by thousands of Hezbollah members exploded on September 17-18, and an air campaign followed. Hassan Nasrallah was killed in an underground headquarters in Beirut on September 27, and the ground invasion of the south began on October 1. More than 4,000 people were killed in Lebanon in 2023-24.

The ceasefire of November 27, 2024 required Hezbollah to withdraw north of the Litani River and the Lebanese army to deploy in its place. Israel withdrew but kept five hilltop positions and went on striking what it called rearmament. The war cut the arsenal to between 30,000 and 50,000 rockets by Israeli estimates and broke the deterrent: when Israel struck Iran in June 2025, Hezbollah stayed out. Assad's fall (9d) cut its supply line through Syria.

Lebanon, meanwhile, got a state back. Parliament chose the army commander, Joseph Aoun, as president, and Nawaf Salam's government took office promising to restore the state's monopoly on arms. In August 2025 the cabinet ordered the army to draw up a plan to disarm Hezbollah, which the party rejected.

9c. The 2026 War, the Ceasefires, and the Zone

The second war began with Iran's. On March 2, 2026 Hezbollah fired on Israel for the first time since the ceasefire, citing Israeli violations and the killing of Iran's supreme leader two days earlier (Module 10). Lebanon's government banned Hezbollah's military activities the same day, and on March 5 Salam banned all activity by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in the country. Israel resumed its air campaign across Lebanon and invaded the south again on March 16.

The war's deadliest day, April 8, which Lebanese call Black Wednesday, killed 357 people in simultaneous strikes within ten minutes, by the health ministry's count. Northern Israelis spent weeks in shelters in March, and 38 Israeli soldiers and a civilian contractor were killed in Lebanon by June 30.

The fighting stopped in stages (table), through direct Israeli-Lebanese talks mediated by Washington. The framework the two governments then signed, which the American secretary of state, Marco Rubio, called a deal for 'lasting peace and security', trades Hezbollah's full disarmament for a phased Israeli withdrawal. It begins with two 'pilot zones' that the Lebanese army takes over once Hezbollah has disarmed there; of villages in the first that Israel never entered, the army said, 'We never left.' Qassem called the framework 'null and void', and no further handover has been reported. A trilateral military meeting at Central Command's headquarters in Tampa was set for October 20-22: Lebanon said it would press for an end to Israeli strikes, and Washington and Israel have made direct coordination between the two armies a condition of progress.

Date (2026)	Step
April 16-17	Trump announces a ten-day truce, which takes effect overnight
April 23-24	Extended by three weeks after the two countries' ambassadors meet in Washington
May 15	Extended by 45 days after two days of talks in Washington
June 19	Trump announces a truce between Israel and Hezbollah
June 26	The framework is signed in Washington
July 14-15	Sixth round, in Rome: the pilot zones' structure and guidelines agreed
July 21	The Lebanese army deploys in Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh, in the second zone
August 4-6	Seventh round, in Rome: Israel refuses to withdraw further until the army fully controls the first two zones; a shortlist of possible monitors is agreed
August 13	A State Department official says a permanent Israeli presence would be inconsistent with the framework

Agence France-Presse, Reuters, and Naharnet; L'Orient Today; The National (July 16, 2026).

By the health ministry's count of September 5, the 2026 war killed 4,358 people in Lebanon, fighters and civilians, whom the ministry does not distinguish, bringing the total since October 2023 to 8,920. Displacement peaked above 1.2 million, and about 360,000 people were still displaced in August. Israel holds a 'security zone' up to 10 kilometers deep behind what it calls the Yellow Line. About 50 frontline villages inside it, among them Khiam and Bint Jbeil, have been destroyed, residents may not return, and a further 'Grey Line', with the land behind it kept empty, is under discussion in Israel.

October restated the standoff. Qassem said on October 6 that Hezbollah was 'ready to cooperate on domestic issues, whether the state's monopoly on arms, the economy or coexistence', but 'without American diktats', and that 'Israel cannot remain in southern Lebanon indefinitely'. Days later Lebanese security forces seized a truck carrying 780 kilograms of explosives. Salam called it a 'criminal operation', a Hezbollah legislator claimed the cargo for operations against Israel, and Rubio told Aoun that returning it 'should be out of the question'.

Israeli estimates now put Hezbollah's arsenal as low as 10,000 rockets and mortars. The UN force in the south, about 7,500 peacekeepers, ends its operations under the Security Council's decision of August 2025, unless the Council acts first (Module 13).

9d. Syria After Assad

The fall of Bashar al-Assad on December 8, 2024 replaced a hostile but predictable neighbor with an unknown one: a government led by Ahmed al-Sharaa, formerly of al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, backed by Turkey and courted by the Gulf. Washington removed him from its terrorism sanctions list on November 7, 2025, and the Security Council lifted its own sanctions on him the same month. Israel destroyed most of the Syrian army's heavy weapons within days, declared that the 1974 disengagement agreement had collapsed, and seized the UN buffer zone on the Golan and the Syrian summit of Mount Hermon beyond it.

In July 2025 Israel struck government forces to stop their entry into Sweida, the Druze province, saying it was protecting the Druze, whose kin are citizens of Israel and serve in its army; Damascus condemned the strikes. The Druze leader Hikmat al-Hijri's militia now controls much of the province, and on October 7, 2026 his followers rallied there with Israeli flags, to the condemnation of other residents.

The two states nonetheless talked. Meetings in Paris in January 2026 produced a communication cell under American supervision. Talks on a security agreement reached 'understandings on almost everything on paper', in the words of Syria's foreign minister, Asaad al-Shaibani, before stalling in the Iran war. On August 18 Israel struck the disused Abu al-Duhur airbase in Idlib, saying that 'Syria was on the verge of breaching by permitting Turkish troops to deploy at an airbase near Aleppo'.

Turkey dismissed the claim as 'frivolous allegations', and the American envoy, Tom Barrack, called the strike 'an unnecessary escalation'. Five days later the two sides met in Jordan. Damascus wants Israel back on the lines it held before Assad's fall and the 1974 agreement restored; Israel says it will keep troops in a 'security zone' in southern Syria and will not accept a Turkish deployment. No round after that meeting has been reported.

9e. Security, or Occupation by Another Name?

The case that the zones are security. October 7 showed what an enemy force on the border can do, and Hezbollah's Radwan force was built to do the same in the Galilee. Netanyahu said in southern Lebanon on June 30, 'As long as Hezbollah, armed, is here and threatening us, we will stay here,' adding that 'there are two sovereign states that want to live in peace.' Katz has said Israel will not withdraw 'as long as Hezbollah is not disarmed'. Amine Ayoub, writing for the Middle East Forum, argues that forward deterrence means 'denying adversaries the territory, time, and infrastructure they need to threaten Israel'.

The case that they are occupation by another name. Critics cite Katz's own words of August 12, 'we are not withdrawing from this security zone' and 'we will cleanse this area'. Salam warned in March of a 'risk of annexation' of the land south of the Litani, and the Lebanese researcher Ahmad Baydoun describes a 'West Bankification of those who remained'. Miroslav Zafirov of the Atlantic Council writes that the approach 'converts emergency security arrangements into durable territorial realities'. In Syria, Shaibani said, 'Our focus now is stopping the aggression before anything else—even before the security agreement.'

The evidence supports parts of both. Hezbollah has not disarmed and claims the explosives seized in October (9c); two Israeli soldiers were killed in an explosion in southern Lebanon on August 5; and the Lebanese army said in July that even the first zone 'is not completely clear yet'. Yet the zone is far deeper than the hilltop positions Israel kept in 2025 (9b), the villages inside it have been razed, Israel has declined to expand the pilot zones, and in Syria it holds ground beyond the 1974 line (9c-9d).

The course's reading: the zones began as security and are acquiring the features of occupation: open-ended tenure, destroyed villages, and withdrawal tied to a disarmament that Hezbollah refuses and the Lebanese state cannot yet impose. The threat they answer is real; their permanence is a choice. The framework is the test of whether Israel will trade ground for a Lebanese state that takes Hezbollah's weapons.

Module 9 Key Points

The Northern Front

• Hezbollah was Iran's forward deterrent; the 2024 war, opened by the exploding pagers, broke it, and Hezbollah stayed out in June 2025.

• The 2026 war began on March 2, after Khamenei's killing, and killed 4,358 in Lebanon by September 5.

• The June 26 framework trades Hezbollah's disarmament for phased withdrawal; one handover followed, then the process stalled in August.

• Israel holds a zone up to 10 km deep in Lebanon and ground beyond the 1974 line in Syria.

• Syria's new government talks with Israel; the August strike on Abu al-Duhur made Turkey part of the northern question.

Module 9 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What did Hezbollah do when Israel struck Iran in June 2025?

A) It fired at Haifa
B) It sent the Radwan force across the border into the Galilee
C) It stayed out of the war
D) It fired its remaining long-range missiles at Tel Aviv

2. What triggered the 2026 Lebanon war?

A) Hezbollah's fire on March 2, after Khamenei's killing
B) An Israeli strike on Beirut that killed Hezbollah's new secretary-general
C) The Lebanese army's attempt to disarm Hezbollah by force in the south
D) A Hezbollah raid on an Israeli border post during the Iran ceasefire

3. What does the framework of June 26, 2026 provide?

A) European peacekeepers along the Litani
B) Joint Israeli-Lebanese patrols in the security zone
C) A demilitarized border in exchange for Israel's immediate withdrawal
D) Hezbollah's full disarmament and a phased Israeli withdrawal, beginning with two pilot zones

4. What did Israel say when it struck the Abu al-Duhur airbase in August 2026?

A) That Iranian missiles were stored there
B) That Syria was about to let Turkish troops deploy there
C) That the base had launched drones
D) That Syrian forces had used it to attack the Druze of Sweida again

5. What does the course's reading say the zones are acquiring?

A) International recognition as Israeli territory
B) A UN mandate that makes them lawful under Resolution 1701
C) The Lebanese government's consent as part of the framework
D) The features of occupation

Module 10 — Iran

From the Shadow War to the Open War, and What It Left

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Yaakov Katz and Yonah Jeremy Bob, *Target Tehran: How Israel Is Using Sabotage, Cyberwarfare, Assassination, and Secret Diplomacy to Stop a Nuclear Iran and Create a New Middle East* (2022)

Reference: The IAEA Director General's quarterly reports on Iran, the only independent record of the enriched-uranium stockpile and of inspectors' access, and the text of the Islamabad Memorandum of June 17, 2026

10a. The Shadow War (2010-2024)

For fifteen years Israel fought Iran without a declared war. The Stuxnet worm, widely attributed to Israel and the United States, wrecked centrifuges at Natanz around 2010; nuclear scientists were assassinated, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh in 2020; and thousands of airstrikes hit Iranian arms shipments and positions in Syria. Iran's answer was its 'axis of resistance', Hezbollah, the Iraqi militias, the Houthis, and Hamas, and a nuclear program that, after the American withdrawal in 2018 from the 2015 agreement, enriched uranium to 60%, a short step from weapons grade, while restricting inspections.

The shadow war became direct in 2024. In April Iran fired a barrage of missiles and drones after Israel struck its consulate compound in Damascus; Israel, the United States, Britain, France, and Jordan intercepted almost all of it. In October it fired again after Israel killed Nasrallah, and on October 26 Israel struck back, destroying Iran's long-range air defenses and leaving its skies open for what followed.

10b. June 2025

On June 13, 2025 Israel launched Operation Rising Lion. Its opening strikes hit Natanz, the missile force, and the high command, killing the Revolutionary Guards' commander, the armed forces' chief of staff, and leading nuclear scientists. Over twelve days Iran fired about 550 ballistic missiles and about 1,000 drones; most were intercepted, and the National Insurance Institute counts 35 Israeli civilians killed. On June 22 American bombers and submarine-launched missiles struck Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan, and a ceasefire took effect on June 24.

The result was disputed within days: a leaked preliminary assessment by the Defense Intelligence Agency, an American military intelligence agency, put the setback at months, while the Central Intelligence Agency's director spoke of damage that would take years to repair. Iran's stockpile of 440.9 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60%, last verified just before the strikes, has not been seen since. Inspectors returned to undamaged sites late in 2025, but the IAEA has had no access to the bombed sites or to the uranium. Israel had shown it could reach any target in Iran; whether it could stop the program for good was the question of the winter.

10c. The 2026 War

A second war followed. On February 28, 2026 the United States and Israel opened a joint campaign, Epic Fury to the Americans and Roaring Lion to Israel, that killed Ali Khamenei on the first day and the Guards' commander, Mohammad Pakpour, by the next. Iran fired at Israel, at American bases, and at the Gulf states, and closed the Strait of Hormuz; on March 18 a strike on Qatar's Ras Laffan cut the country's capacity to export liquefied gas by 17%. Khamenei's son Mojtaba succeeded him.

The missile war on Israel was smaller in rate than 2025's: Iran's launches fell steeply within days (10d), and the IDF counted more than 400 ballistic missiles fired at Israel by late March, 92% of them intercepted. The National Insurance Institute counts 27 Israeli civilians killed. Iranian civilian deaths, 1,701 by April 7 by the count of HRANA, an Iranian human rights monitor, are contested. The news site Semafor reported on March 14, citing American officials, that Israel had told Washington it was 'critically low' on interceptors; the IDF denied it, and the government approved NIS 2.6 billion for urgent procurement that night.

A ceasefire mediated by Pakistan took effect on April 7-8. Talks in Islamabad failed, and the United States blockaded Iran's ports from April 13. On June 8, after a Hezbollah attack drew Israeli strikes on Beirut, Iran fired ballistic missiles at Israel for the first time in two months, Israel struck back, and both sides declared the exchange over by evening, Israel under pressure from Trump. On June 17 Trump and Iran's president, Masoud Pezeshkian, signed the Islamabad Memorandum.

The memorandum's 14 points set a 60-day ceasefire on all fronts, including Lebanon, the lifting of the blockade, and 60 days to negotiate a final deal on the stockpile, 'with a minimum of on-site downblending under the IAEA'. Enrichment was only to be 'discussed', and missiles and proxies were left out. Mojtaba Khamenei said he had a 'different opinion' on it but approved its signing; he has not been seen in public since the war began.

It did not last. Iran declared the strait closed again on June 20, citing Israeli strikes in Lebanon, struck three tankers on July 7, and on July 8 Trump declared the truce 'over'. The American campaign that followed, and the reinstated blockade, have been fought without Israel, whose defense minister said on July 9, 'If we need to return, we will return with even greater force.' Iran's Guards declared the strait 'closed to unauthorized access' on September 27, and on October 11 Iran called the American reply to its latest proposal 'insufficient'. No ceasefire is in force. Indirect talks continue through Pakistan and Qatar, but Iran's security chief, Mohsen Rezaei, says that 'even a particle of enriched uranium will not exit Iran'. Trump has said he will not resume the war before the American midterms. Israeli television reported that Netanyahu had urged him to strike before both elections, which his office denied, and on October 22 Channel 13 reported the IDF's chief of staff as saying that he saw no need to strike Iran before the Israeli vote.

The diplomatic front moved too. On September 9 the IAEA's Board of Governors voted 23-3, with 8 abstentions, to report Iran to the UN Security Council, the first referral in twenty years; Russia, China, and Niger voted against. Iran's mission answered that 'the current situation is created solely because of the criminal acts of aggression by the U.S. and Israeli regime'.

10d. Did the Campaigns Achieve Their Aims?

The case that they did. 'The most important thing is that we saved the State of Israel from the threat of nuclear annihilation,' Netanyahu said on June 15, 2026, and 'with an agreement or without one, Iran will not have nuclear weapons.' At a campaign event on September 17 he said, 'Iran was about to make atomic bombs to destroy us.' The Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), an American research group, judged in June that Iran's ability to build a nuclear explosive was 'severely degraded' and would now

take 'more than a year'. The American commander in the region, Adm. Brad Cooper, called the war a 'generational military defeat' for Iran.

The case that they did not. When the April ceasefire was announced, Lapid said 'there has never been such a political disaster in all of our history' and that 'Israel wasn't even at the table'. In June he called the emerging deal 'one of the most horrific failures of Israel's foreign and defence policy', and Liberman called it 'a total victory for the Ayatollahs'. Eisenkot said in July that Iran 'had no nuclear bombs whatsoever', and an Associated Press review found Netanyahu's claim that Iran had already obtained bombs unsupported. Reuel Marc Gerecht of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a Washington institute, wrote in September that 'militarily, Iran has so far won the Hormuz contest'.

Objective	What the campaigns achieved	What remains
The nuclear program	Enrichment sites struck in 2025; about 22,000 centrifuges likely destroyed in 2025, leaving 'no identifiable route to weapon-grade uranium through its centrifuge plants' (ISIS, June 2026)	The 60% stockpile (10b); the IAEA 'cannot provide any information on the current size, composition or whereabouts' of it and cannot tell whether enrichment has stopped
The missile force	Launches cut about 92% within days; the IDF expects fewer than 2,000 missiles at the end of 2026, against pre-war projections above 6,000	Production partly restored with Chinese help, the IDF says; at least 501 missiles and drones fired at American bases and Gulf states from July 7 to September 2
The regime	The supreme leader and the Guards' commander killed	Intact under Mojtaba Khamenei; the rial at 2.2 million to the dollar and inflation near 70% in September
The strait	Iran's oil exports 'effectively ceased' by August 19 under the blockade, by its central bank governor's account	Closed except to ships Iran authorizes; no ceasefire on October 22

IAEA (September 2026); ISIS (June 9, 2026); the IDF's assessment as reported by the Jerusalem Post (September 11, 2026); JINSA, an American defense institute (September 2, 2026); Reuters and Agence France-Presse.

The evidence in the table supports both cases: more damage to Iran's military power than any campaign before, and no verified answer to the question that started the wars, where the uranium is.

The course's reading: the campaigns achieved what force can do, setting back the program and the missile force and killing the old leader, and not what force cannot: a verified end to the stockpile, a changed regime, or a settlement. The next government inherits a threat delayed rather than removed, and a decision on whether to strike again that will be made largely in Washington.

10e. The Interceptor Problem and the Houthis

The wars exposed the arithmetic of the missile shield (Module 6). An American THAAD interceptor costs $12.4 million in the Pentagon's 2026 request, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington research group, estimated that between 1,060 and 1,430 American PAC-3 interceptors had been fired across the theater by the April ceasefire. Lockheed Martin delivered 620 PAC-3s in 2025; a framework agreed in January 2026 aims at about 2,000 a year, which CSIS expects by 2030. The Royal United Services Institute, a British think tank, estimated in March that Israel had used about 81% of its pre-war Arrow stock, an estimate Israel disputes.

Stocks are still being rebuilt, and their pace will shape when Israel and the United States can afford another round. Israel approved increased Arrow production on April 6, 2026, and the Iron Beam laser played little part in the 2026 campaign.

The Houthis, Iran's allies in Yemen, fired at Israel several times during the war; their last verified attacks were two ballistic missiles on June 8 and a drone intercepted over Eilat on June 9. Since July their war has been with Saudi Arabia: a declared blockade from July 20, the seizure of Yemen's Red Sea coast and the Bab el-Mandeb strait in September, and missiles fired at Riyadh on October 12-14.

Module 10 Key Points

Iran

• The shadow war turned direct in 2024; Israel's strike of October 26 left Iran's skies open for the campaigns that followed.

• June 2025's twelve days showed Israel could reach any target; Iran's 60% uranium has not been seen since.

• The 2026 war killed Ali Khamenei on February 28; the June memorandum collapsed in July, and no ceasefire is in force.

• The IAEA Board referred Iran to the Security Council on September 9; the agency cannot say where the uranium is.

• Since July the war has been America's, without Israel, and interceptor stocks constrain what comes next.

Module 10 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What did Israel's strike of October 26, 2024 destroy?

A) Iran's oil terminals
B) Iran's long-range air defenses
C) The Natanz centrifuge halls
D) The Revolutionary Guards' headquarters in Tehran

2. What did the IAEA Board do on September 9, 2026?

A) It closed Iran's file
B) It certified that Iran had halted all enrichment since June 2025
C) It reported Iran to the Security Council, 23-3-8
D) It voted to restore inspections at Fordow under the June memorandum

3. What did Mojtaba Khamenei say about the June 17 memorandum?

A) That he had a 'different opinion' on it but approved its signing
B) That he rejected it
C) That it was his own initiative
D) That the Assembly of Experts must ratify it

4. How many missiles does the IDF expect Iran to have at the end of 2026?

A) About 300
B) Fewer than 2,000
C) Over 4,000
D) More than 6,000, as projected before the war

5. What does the course's reading say the campaigns did not achieve?

A) A verified end to the stockpile, a changed regime, or a settlement
B) Damage to the missile force
C) The death of the supreme leader
D) Any strike on Iran's enrichment sites

Module 11 — The Economy

The Paradox of a War Economy That Boomed

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Dan Senor and Saul Singer, *Start-up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle* (2009)

Reference: The Bank of Israel's *Annual Report 2025*, whose sixth chapter estimates the war's fiscal cost, and the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Article IV report on Israel of July 2026

11a. The Paradox

Three years of war on several fronts, mass reserve call-ups, downgrades by all three rating agencies, and Iranian missiles on its cities have left Israel with an economy that, by most short-run measures, is booming. The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange's main index, the TA-35, rose 40.5% in the Jewish year that ended in September, against 16% for the main American index, and the exchange's value passed NIS 3 trillion for the first time.

Unemployment, inflation, and interest rates look like a peacetime economy's (table). The economy shrank during the Iran war and rebounded as activity postponed by the missiles resumed.

Three things explain the paradox. The export sectors, technology, defense, and gas, sell abroad, and the wars raised demand for two of them. A current-account surplus, which Fitch forecasts at 2.1% of GDP for 2026, and record reserves made the shekel a haven rather than a casualty: it reached its strongest level since 1993 (table), and the central bank resumed buying dollars to slow it, $1.8 billion in May and June. And two decades of debt reduction, to about 60% of GDP before the war, let the state borrow the war's cost without a crisis.

Measure	Latest figure	Note
Growth	−1.7% in the first quarter of 2026 and +14.9% in the second, at annual rates; 2026 forecasts of 4.5% (IMF), 5.6% (Bank of Israel, October 21), and 3.2% (Fitch)	The Bank of Israel's forecast for 2026, and its 7.5% for 2027, count Israeli firms' production abroad; without it, they are 3.4% and 5.1%. The IMF forecasts 4.4% for 2027
Inflation and interest	Consumer prices up 1.6% in the year to September; the policy rate held at 3.25% on October 21, after four cuts in 2026, the last on September 1	The Bank of Israel expects one more cut within a year
Unemployment	2.8% in August	Seasonally adjusted
The shekel	NIS 3.089 to the dollar on October 16: up 6.7% in a year and 29% in three	Down about 9% since its peak of NIS 2.81 on May 29; the course's calculation from Bank of Israel rates
Reserves	$237 billion at the end of September	After a record $241.6 billion at the end of August
The 2026 deficit	3.2% of GDP over the 12 months to September, against a legal ceiling of 4.9%	Tax revenue up 13.9% in the first eight months; the IMF projects 6.2% for the year on its own basis
Ratings	Moody's Baa1, stable; Standard & Poor's A, stable; Fitch A, negative	Moody's cut twice in 2024; Standard & Poor's outlook has been stable since November 2025

CBS (September 16, 2026); IMF World Economic Outlook (October 13, 2026); Bank of Israel; Fitch (October 2026); Finance Ministry.

11b. The Start-up Nation

Technology is the economy's engine: 58% of exports in 2025, by the Israel Innovation Authority's count, and about 400,000 employees. The model is specific. The army's technical units select and train talent at eighteen (Module 6), universities such as the Technion and the Weizmann Institute deepen it, and a venture-capital industry funds it. The Innovation Authority, citing OECD data, puts research and development spending at 6.8% of GDP in 2024, the highest in the OECD.

The war years brought the industry's biggest sales. Palo Alto Networks completed its $25 billion purchase of CyberArk on February 11, 2026, and Google its $32 billion purchase of Wiz in March, the two largest acquisitions of Israeli companies. Israeli technology firms raised about $14.6 billion in 2025 and more than $11 billion in the first three quarters of 2026, up about half on the year before, with cybersecurity taking 38%.

The warning signs are in the same reports. Research and development jobs fell by about 3,500 in 2025, the first decline in a decade, and the share of Israeli technology companies' employees based in Israel fell from 69% in January 2019 to 62% in March 2026. The industry's people are also the reservists, the protesters of 2023, and among the engineers whose departures have risen (Module 5).

11c. The Gas

The Tamar and Leviathan fields, found off Haifa in 2009-10 and operated by Chevron with Israeli partners, made Israel an energy exporter for the first time. Gas supplies most of its electricity and flows by pipeline to Jordan and Egypt. On December 17, 2025 Netanyahu approved what he called 'the largest gas deal in Israel's history': 130 billion cubic meters for Egypt through 2040, worth about NIS 112 billion, of which NIS 58 billion goes to the state.

The partners approved an expansion of Leviathan in January 2026 that would raise its deliveries by 9 billion cubic meters a year, to about 21 billion. The deal binds Egypt's power grid to Israeli gas across a cold peace and a war that Egyptian opinion condemns, which is its strategic point and its weakness. The fields are also targets: Israel shut Leviathan and the smaller Karish field during both Iran wars, and exports to Egypt stayed halted while the state of emergency lasted, into April 2026.

11d. The War's Bill

Worked example — What the War Cost, and Who Pays

Start with the Bank of Israel's estimate of the war's fiscal cost: about NIS 350 billion over 2023-26, NIS 116 billion of it in 2025. Against a GDP of about NIS 2.1 trillion in 2025 (Module 1's figure per person times the population), that is about a sixth of a year's output. The state paid mostly by borrowing. Deficits of 6.9% of GDP in 2024 and 4.7% in 2025, after tax rises, took debt from its pre-war level (11a) to 68.5% of GDP at the end of 2025; it is heading for about 70% in 2026, and the IMF projects about 74% by 2031. A broader count by Zman Yisrael, the Hebrew site of the Times of Israel, reaches nearly NIS 700 billion since October 7, 2023 by adding American-supplied weapons and lost output. The lasting cost is the next decade's budget. The Bank of Israel expects defense to take about 5.5% of GDP a year through 2030, about 1.5 points more than its pre-war estimate, and interest about 2.5%, leaving less room for the investments that 11e describes.

11e. The Structural Problems

- **The Haredi labor gap.** Many Haredi men do not work (Module 5). The IDI estimates that without their integration the loss to GDP per person 'could reach more than 10%, equivalent to approximately 160 billion shekels' by 2050, in 2023 prices.
- **The Arab labor gap.** About 45% of Arab women work, against a government target of 53%, by the IMF's figures. In July the IMF said that low employment among Haredi men and Arab women had 'shifted from a social issue into a genuine macroeconomic threat'.
- **The cost of housing.** The country's most persistent grievance since the protests of 2011. Home prices, after a decade of rises, are now falling, by 1.2% in the year to June-July 2026, while rents rose 3.8% in the year to September.

11f. Durable, or Borrowed?

The case that the resilience is durable. The finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, called the IMF's October forecast 'a badge of honor for Israel's economy and the citizens of Israel'. Moody's found in July 'no pressures, either upward or downward' on its rating, and Standard & Poor's judged in May that 'unless there is further broad escalation the macro-economic consequences for Israel will be limited'. Yali Rothenberg, the Finance Ministry's accountant general, said in January that 'the debt-to-GDP ratio reflects our use of fiscal space during a complex period'.

The case that it is borrowed. The IMF warned in July that 'the central threat is now the gradual erosion of the country's growth potential', with GDP about 9% below its pre-war path. Fitch keeps a negative outlook; it cited 'fractious domestic politics' in March and warned in October that the election may not produce a government. The Bank of Israel's governor, Amir Yaron, said in January: 'We are not the US and cannot deal with debt the way they are dealing with it.' On October 21 the bank warned that raising defense spending without matching budget adjustments would widen the deficit and could rekindle inflation.

The evidence divides by horizon. The short-run figures in 11a favor the first case. The long-run figures favor the second: the defense and interest bill in 11d, a Haredi share of each age group that keeps rising (Module 5), and a 2027 budget, with whatever new defense spending it carries, that falls to the next government.

The course's reading: the cyclical strength is real and so is the structural erosion, and the war has made the second harder to fix by tying up the budget the fix would need. The next government's first economic test is a 2027 budget that pays for a larger army without cutting the investment in Haredi and Arab employment on which long-run growth depends.

Module 11 Key Points

The Economy

• By short-run measures the war economy boomed: record stocks, low unemployment, falling inflation, and a strong shekel.

• Technology supplies 58% of exports; the sales of Wiz and CyberArk were the two largest acquisitions of Israeli companies.

• The Egypt gas deal of December 2025, 130 billion cubic meters through 2040, is what the government calls Israel's largest export deal.

• The Bank of Israel puts the war's fiscal cost at about NIS 350 billion; debt rose from about 60% to 68.5% of GDP.

• Fitch rates Israel A with a negative outlook, and the IMF warns that growth potential is eroding.

Module 11 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. How did Israel's economy perform in the second quarter of 2026, after the Iran war?

A) It shrank
B) It contracted for a second quarter, by 1.7% at an annual rate
C) It stagnated as reservists stayed in uniform through the spring
D) It grew 14.9% at an annual rate

2. What did the Bank of Israel do on September 1, 2026?

A) Raised its rate to stem the shekel's fall
B) Held its rate for the fifth meeting in a row
C) Cut its rate to 3.25%
D) Pegged the shekel to the dollar after its May peak

3. What does the Bank of Israel estimate the war's fiscal cost to be over 2023-26?

A) NIS 50 billion
B) NIS 112 billion
C) About NIS 350 billion
D) Nearly NIS 700 billion, counting lost output

4. Which agency rates Israel A with a negative outlook?

A) Moody's
B) Fitch
C) Standard & Poor's
D) Moody's and Standard & Poor's

5. What does the course's reading conclude about the war economy?

A) Its cyclical strength is real, but its long-run growth potential is eroding
B) It has collapsed
C) It is booming without risks
D) It depends entirely on American aid

Module 12 — Israel and the World

The Alliances, the Ruptures, and the Diaspora

Recommended Reading / Reference

Book: Dennis Ross, *Doomed to Succeed: The U.S.-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama* (2015)

Reference: Gallup's World Affairs survey of February 2026, and the annual audits of antisemitic incidents by the Anti-Defamation League in the United States and the Community Security Trust in Britain

12a. The American Relationship

No relationship matters more to Israel, and none has changed more in this era. The governments have never been closer: the joint war on Iran (Module 10), the Gaza plan and the Board of Peace that Trump chairs (Module 7), the embassy in Jerusalem since 2018, American recognition of the Golan's annexation in 2019, and Trump's endorsement of Netanyahu's reelection (Module 4). Washington has also set limits, on annexation of the West Bank (Module 8), on the end of the Gaza war (Module 7), and on a permanent Israeli presence in Lebanon (Module 9).

The current aid memorandum (Module 6) is in its last years, and its successor is being negotiated on new terms. Netanyahu told *The Economist* in January 2026, 'I want to taper off military aid within the next 10 years', and when asked whether he meant to zero, answered 'Yes', adding that 'it's in the works'. The American ambassador, Mike Huckabee, wrote in June that the next memorandum would end aid and 'be based on trade'.

Beneath the governments, the ground has moved. In Gallup's survey of 1,001 adults on February 2-16, 2026, 41% of Americans said they sympathized more with the Palestinians and 36% with the Israelis, a gap within the margin of error that Gallup called 'the first time they have reached parity'. About two-thirds of Democrats sided with the Palestinians, independents favored them for the first time, and about half of Americans aged 18-34 did, against a quarter for the Israelis.

Congress has moved more slowly. On April 15, 2026 the Senate rejected resolutions to block two arms sales, of bulldozers worth $295 million by 40-59 and of 1,000-pound bombs worth $151.8 million by 36-63. More than three dozen Democrats, most of the caucus, voted to block them, where only 23 had backed a similar measure in July 2025. The midterm elections (Module 13) choose the Congress likely to consider the next memorandum.

12b. The Region

- **Egypt and Jordan.** The cold peaces of Module 2 have held through this war too. Egypt mediates in Gaza with Qatar and Turkey and buys Israel's gas (Module 11). Jordan polices the long border, fears above all a displacement of West Bank Palestinians into the kingdom, and hosts American forces that Iran's missiles have targeted (Module 10).
- **The Abraham Accords.** The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco normalized relations in 2020; Sudan agreed but never ratified. The accords survived the Gaza war, Kazakhstan's accession was announced in November 2025, and the Emirates have called annexation of the West Bank a 'red line'.
- **Saudi Arabia.** The prize, in talks that October 7 interrupted. At the White House on November 18, 2025, Mohammed bin Salman said, 'We want to be part of the Abraham Accords. But we want also to be

sure that we secure a clear path to a two-state solution.' On August 7, 2026 the kingdom signed the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement with Turkey and Pakistan, under which an armed attack on one 'shall be regarded as an attack against them all'.

• **Turkey.** An adversary and a mediator at once. Erdoğan's forces in Syria are the northern front's new question (Module 9), yet Turkey is a guarantor of the Gaza ceasefire, its foreign minister sits on the Board of Peace's executive board for Gaza, and it joined the Makkah pact.

• **The Gulf after the Iran war.** Every Gulf state hosts American forces, and Iran struck Gulf soil in a war that began with American and Israeli strikes (Module 10). The Houthis' war on Saudi Arabia adds a front the Gulf fights without Israel.

12c. Europe and the Global South

Europe is Israel's largest trading partner, the largest market for its arms, 36% of defense exports in 2025, and the site of its sharpest diplomatic rupture. France led the recognition wave with Britain, Canada, Australia, Portugal, Belgium, and others (Module 8). On April 21, 2026 the EU's foreign ministers rejected a proposal from Spain, Ireland, and Slovenia to suspend the association agreement; a partial suspension needs a qualified majority, and Germany, Italy, Hungary, and the Czech Republic have consistently opposed one.

On May 11, after Hungary's new government under Péter Magyar dropped its predecessor's veto, the EU sanctioned three settlers and four settler organizations. The bans on settlement goods that Britain, France, and Canada announced on September 8 (Module 8) drew support from nine more European states. Israel answered Britain hardest: it announced that it would close the British consulate in Jerusalem, expel British officers from the center monitoring the Gaza ceasefire, end British training of the PA's security forces, and bar about a dozen Britons, lawmakers among them. Huckabee called Britain's ban 'irrational'.

Arms policy has moved both ways. Germany lifted its partial suspension of arms exports in November 2025 and in December approved a $3.1 billion expansion of its Arrow 3 purchase, to about $6.5 billion, while Britain says it has suspended or rejected more than 80 export licenses since 2024. The Global South presses mainly through the courts and the General Assembly, led by South Africa's genocide case (Module 7). It is not one bloc: India took 29% of Israel's arms exports in 2021-25, the largest share of any country, by SIPRI's count.

12d. The Diaspora and Antisemitism

Most Jews outside Israel (Module 1) live in the United States. The war mobilized diaspora communities, through fundraising, volunteering, and the campaigns for the hostages, and divided them over its conduct and over the government.

Antisemitism rose with the war. The Anti-Defamation League counted 6,274 incidents in the United States in 2025, down 33% from 2024's peak but with a record 203 assaults. Britain's Community Security Trust counted 3,700, its second-highest total after 2023, and France counted 1,320 acts, down from its 2023 peak. The attacks included the murders of two Israeli embassy employees in Washington in May 2025, the firebombing in Boulder that June, and the Yom Kippur attack on the Heaton Park synagogue in Manchester in October 2025, in which two worshippers died.

Israel's government reads the surge as proof that the diaspora needs the state; some diaspora Jews experience it as a cost of a government's conduct they did not choose. Whether Israel speaks for the Jews,

and whether Jews are answerable for Israel, is a question older than the state, and it is being argued again on both sides of the ocean.

12e. Isolated, or Indispensable?

The case that Israel is isolated. Its critics point to American opinion, a Democratic caucus whose senators mostly voted to block arms sales, the recognition wave, the EU's settler sanctions, the bans on settlement goods, and the courts (12a and 12c). Britain's foreign secretary, Ed Miliband, framed the dispute in September: 'Our argument is with the conduct of its government.' The EU's foreign-policy chief, Kaja Kallas, said in July that 'everybody agrees that the situation in the West Bank is really intolerable'.

The case that it is indispensable. Its defenders point to the closest alignment with an American administration in the relationship's history, Abraham Accords that survived the war and gained a member, a Saudi crown prince who says he wants to join them, and record defense exports, with Europe their largest market (12c). Katz said in June that 'defense exports are a mirror of Israeli strength, ingenuity, and the ability to think differently'. Sa'ar dismissed Britain's measures as 'outrageous lies' and 'a gross interference in the electoral process'.

The evidence separates governments from publics. Governments, most of Europe's among them, still buy Israel's arms and gas and trade with it. The American public has moved, and the young most of all (12a).

The course's reading: Israel's isolation is deeper among publics than among governments, and the public trend, slower and generational, is the more consequential, because the next aid memorandum will be written by politicians who answer to it. The election of October 27 will shape how far the governments follow.

Module 12 Key Points

Israel and the World

• The governments have never been closer, while Gallup found Americans' sympathies at parity, 41% to 36%, for the first time.

• Netanyahu wants American military aid tapered to zero within ten years; the next memorandum is being negotiated around trade.

• The cold peaces held; Saudi Arabia wants a path to statehood first and signed a defense pact with Turkey and Pakistan.

• Europe sanctioned settlers and restricted settlement goods, while Germany expanded its Arrow 3 purchase to about $6.5 billion.

• Antisemitic assaults in the United States hit a record in 2025, though total incidents fell.

Module 12 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What did Gallup's February 2026 survey find about Americans' sympathies?

A) A tie at 38%
B) 36% Palestinians to 41% Israelis, the closest gap since 2001
C) Israelis ahead by roughly two to one, as in every year since 2001
D) 41% Palestinians to 36% Israelis

2. What did Netanyahu say about American military aid?

A) He wants it doubled
B) He wants to taper it off to zero within ten years
C) He wants it ended at once
D) He wants it converted into loans repayable after the 2028 memorandum expires

3. What does the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement of August 7, 2026 commit its signatories to?

A) Treating an armed attack on one as an attack on all of them
B) Recognizing Israel
C) Joint naval patrols in the Red Sea
D) A common arms market by 2030

4. Which government did Israel answer in September 2026 by announcing the closure of its consulate in Jerusalem?

A) The Netherlands
B) Ireland and Spain
C) Britain
D) Germany, after its arms curbs

5. What does the course's reading say about Israel's isolation?

A) It is total
B) It has ended with the Gaza ceasefire and the Abraham Accords' expansion
C) It is confined to the courts and has no effect on trade or arms sales
D) It is deeper among publics than among governments

Module 13 — Where Things Stand, and What to Watch

The Argument, the Contradictions, and the Dates Ahead

Recommended Reading / Reference

Reference: The Central Elections Committee's results on the night of October 27 and the official results due on November 4, and the Israel Democracy Institute's analyses of coalition formation

13a. The Argument

The course has made one argument. Israel was built to win short wars (Module 6) and to postpone its hardest questions (Module 2), and October 7 ended its capacity to do either. Three years of war have broken Hamas as an army, Hezbollah as a deterrent, and Iran's air defenses (Modules 7, 9, and 10), at a cost in lives, money, the reserves' endurance, and standing abroad (Modules 6, 11, and 12).

Every postponed question is now due at once: who serves in the army, who checks the majority, who answers for the failure of October 7, what becomes of the Palestinians Israel rules, and whether the American alliance survives an American public that has changed. The election of October 27 is the first chance since the war began for voters to choose who will answer them.

13b. Five Contradictions

- **Victories without endings.** No enemy is finished. Hamas keeps its weapons (Module 7), Hezbollah keeps enough of its arsenal to refuse disarmament (Module 9), and Iran's enriched uranium is unaccounted for (Module 10). Israel's answer, holding zones in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria, buys security at the price of permanence.
- **A boom and an erosion.** Share prices set records through the war and the shekel touched its strongest level in three decades, while the IMF warned that long-run growth potential is eroding (Module 11). The war's bill is being paid from the budget room that the integration of the Haredim and Arab citizens would need.
- **The closest government, a cooler public.** No American administration has been more aligned with an Israeli government, and for the first time in Gallup's polling Americans' sympathies stand at parity between Israelis and Palestinians (Module 12).
- **A majority and its checks.** The coalition fought the Supreme Court, the attorney general, and the idea of a state commission, the institutions that check a parliamentary majority in a country without a written constitution (Modules 3 and 6).
- **One army, unequal burdens.** The reservists who carried the war come disproportionately from the secular and national-religious tribes, and the tribe growing fastest serves least (Module 5).

13c. What the Vote Will and Will Not Settle

The vote will settle who governs, and with it three decisions the outgoing coalition left open. The draft is the price of any coalition that includes Shas or United Torah Judaism (Module 4), and a law, an enforcement policy, or another round in the courts will follow. The October 7 inquiry falls to the next government by the

attorney general's own proposal (Module 6). The judiciary's next chapter, from the selection law to the split of the attorney general's office, depends on whether the overhaul's authors keep power (Module 3).

The vote will not settle the Palestinian question (Module 8), and the Palestinian vote that might have renewed the other side's leadership has been postponed (13d). It will not settle Iran, whose next round depends more on Washington, the strait, and the uranium than on Jerusalem (Module 10). And it will not settle the demography, which decides the arithmetic that every future election will be fought over (Module 5).

13d. The Watch List

When	What	Why it matters
October 27, 2026	The Knesset election	Neither bloc polls a majority (Module 3), so turnout, above all Arab turnout, and the lists near the threshold decide whether anyone can govern
November 3	The American midterm elections	The Congress likely to consider the next aid memorandum, and a test of whether Democratic voters' shift on Israel reaches the ballot (Module 12)
By November 4, then within a week	Official results; the president consults the lists and names the first designee	Herzog's choice starts the clock in Module 3; a deadlock would mean another election in 2027
November 10	The 26th Knesset is sworn in	The law reshaping judicial selection takes effect with it unless the High Court rules first (Module 3)
November 19	The earliest date the Israel Land Authority will review the first E1 bids; bidding on the rest runs to December 21	The next government's first decision on the corridor, the sharpest test in Module 8 of whether settlement keeps advancing
December 31	The UN force in southern Lebanon ends its operations, unless the Security Council acts	Whether the Lebanese army can hold the south alone, or Israel's zone becomes the border's real guard (Module 9)
Early 2027	The 2027 budget, which falls to the next government	The next government's first economic test: a larger army without cutting the investment that long-run growth needs (Module 11)
By March 2027	Fitch's next review of its rating and outlook (Module 11)	Whether the agency believes the new government can cut the deficit
September 11, 2027	Palestinian presidential and legislative elections, as rescheduled	The first test of Palestinian legitimacy since Hamas's election victory, if held, and of whether the Hamas-Dahlan list may run (Module 8)
2027-29	The ICJ's written stage in the genocide case (Module 7)	Hearings, and any judgment, come only after it closes
March 2028	The expected retirement of the presiding judge in Netanyahu's trial	Whether a verdict comes before she leaves, or the pardon and plea talks end the case first (Module 4)
July 2028	Herzog's term ends	The pardon request is his to decide, and the Knesset elected on October 27 chooses his successor
2028	The aid memorandum expires; the American presidential election	The terms of the relationship's next decade, aid or trade (Module 12)

Dates as announced by October 22, 2026. Herzog's term is counted from July 7, 2021; the trial judge's retirement is as reported.

13e. The Last Word

Israel ends this course, on October 22, 2026, before a vote that will decide who governs and not the questions the war left.

Israelis will keep answering those questions, and deciding what it means to be Israeli, in coalition rooms after October 27, in the courts, in the army's call-up offices, and in the arithmetic of the next election.

Module 13 Key Points

Where Things Stand, and What to Watch

• Israel was built to win short wars and postpone hard questions; October 7 ended both, and the questions are now due together.

• Five contradictions: victories without endings, a boom and an erosion, close governments and cooler publics, a majority and its checks, unequal burdens.

• The vote will settle who governs, the draft bargain, and the inquiry; it will not settle the Palestinians, Iran, or the demography.

• The dates: October 27, the midterms on November 3, coalition talks, the 2027 budget, and the Palestinian vote of September 2027.

Module 13 Quiz

Check Your Understanding

1. What does the course argue Israel was built to do?

A) Avoid alliances with great powers
B) Hold the territories and deter the region's armies indefinitely
C) Govern by consensus and avoid wars of choice with all of its neighbors
D) Win short wars and postpone hard questions

2. Which decision does the course say falls to the government the October 27 vote produces?

A) Where Iran's uranium is
B) Whether a Palestinian state is created
C) Whether to appoint a state commission into October 7
D) Whether the Haredi share keeps rising

3. Why does the course say the American midterms of November 3 matter to Israel?

A) They choose the Congress likely to consider the next aid memorandum
B) They decide the ICJ case
C) They set Israel's election date
D) They decide whether the American blockade of Iran continues into the next administration

4. When are the rescheduled Palestinian presidential and legislative elections?

A) November 28, 2026, as first decreed
B) September 11, 2027
C) Within 60 days of the Israeli election
D) Not before the ICJ rules on the genocide case

5. What does the course's last word say the vote will decide?

A) Everything
B) Whether Israel annexes the West Bank and ends the occupation
C) Whether the alliance with the United States survives the next memorandum
D) Who governs, not the questions the war left

Answer Sheet

Answers to every module's Check Your Understanding quiz.

Module	Answers
Module 1 Quiz	1. B 2. C 3. D 4. A 5. A
Module 2 Quiz	1. C 2. B 3. D 4. D 5. B
Module 3 Quiz	1. A 2. C 3. B 4. D 5. A
Module 4 Quiz	1. C 2. B 3. A 4. C 5. D
Module 5 Quiz	1. A 2. D 3. B 4. C 5. B
Module 6 Quiz	1. D 2. A 3. C 4. A 5. C
Module 7 Quiz	1. B 2. D 3. B 4. C 5. A
Module 8 Quiz	1. D 2. D 3. B 4. A 5. C
Module 9 Quiz	1. C 2. A 3. D 4. B 5. D
Module 10 Quiz	1. B 2. C 3. A 4. B 5. A
Module 11 Quiz	1. D 2. C 3. C 4. B 5. A
Module 12 Quiz	1. D 2. B 3. A 4. C 5. D
Module 13 Quiz	1. D 2. C 3. A 4. B 5. D