



Global Watch Daily – August 19, 2026

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A concise summary of significant developments in Israel and the world through a grounded Christian worldview.

Israel & Jerusalem

The return of Yehuda Katz was described by President Herzog as closing “the circle left open as a bleeding wound since the Battle of Sultan Yacoub.” Damascus condemned the attacks as “an unjustified act of aggression” that endangered regional security.

Meanwhile, Jared Kushner, former US Middle East envoy and son-in-law of Donald Trump, is actively seeking Israeli support for the US-backed Gaza peace plan ([JNS](#); [BBC News](#); [BBC News](#)).

Israel’s defense minister reaffirmed a firm stance on the Palestinian territories amid ongoing international diplomatic efforts concerning Gaza. Security analysts reported to JNS that Iran’s proxy groups have adapted to financial sanctions by utilizing informal cash networks, complicating attempts to restrict their rearmament and diminish their support base. In response to earlier attacks on its soldiers, the Israeli military announced strikes targeting “Hezbollah terror infrastructure.” Hezbollah has not claimed responsibility for recent incidents, while Lebanese media suggest Israeli involvement ([JNS](#); [JNS](#); [BBC News](#)).

Al Jazeera has also reported on these developments in the region ([Al Jazeera](#)).

Wars & Security (Israel and Region)

Iran’s drone attack on August 17 targeted the office of Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, provoking widespread international condemnation. This strike occurred amid mounting pressure on Baghdad to assert control over Iranian-backed militias and their weaponry. Analysts Bill Roggio and Edmund Fitton-Brown examined the latest United Nations 1267 report, which assesses the current status of the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and affiliated groups worldwide. The Israel Defense Forces reported that a Hezbollah explosive drone wounded three Israeli soldiers on the Ali al Taher Ridge on August 15. Israel retaliated with strikes that killed senior commanders of the Radwan and Badr units. Hezbollah has not claimed responsibility, while Lebanese sources suggest Israeli involvement ([Long War Journal](#); [Long War Journal](#); [Long War Journal](#)).



Kevin Rideout, an American missionary abducted last October by gunmen in Niamey, Niger, and held by the Islamic State, was released this week in Libya. Although details of his release remain unclear, Rideout expressed gratitude to Libyan officials for their role. Historical parallels were drawn to the 1240 Mongol siege of Kyiv led by Genghis Khan's grandson Batu, highlighting the ongoing nature of dynastic conflicts. Additionally, the post "Kim Jong Un's European front" explores North Korea's expanding military posture in Europe ([Long War Journal](#); [FDD](#)).

The drone attack on Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister Masrour Barzani's office on August 17 and 18 drew broad international condemnation. Early on August 17, two drones struck the facility. Meanwhile, China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea continue to coordinate efforts to undermine American military, economic, and cyber dominance. In a recent discussion, Bill Roggio and Bradley Bowman analyzed this axis of aggressors and its implications for global security ([FDD](#); [Long War Journal](#)).

The Houthis escalated hostilities on August 6 by launching drone and missile attacks against Yemeni forces and civilian infrastructure across three governorates. These assaults have intensified the conflict in Yemen while the Iran-backed group simultaneously targets Saudi Arabia and commercial shipping in the Red Sea. General Esmail Qaani, commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force, traveled to Iraq amid Baghdad's legislative efforts to place all weapons under state control. His visit coincides with ongoing Iranian drone and missile strikes against Kurdish opposition groups in the region ([Long War Journal](#); [Long War Journal](#)).

Global Macro & Geopolitics

President Volodymyr Zelensky dismissed Iryna Mudra, deputy head of the presidential office, after Ukraine's anti-corruption agencies revealed a money-laundering network allegedly involving senior officials. Edward Yardeni, president of Yardeni Research, characterized interest rates at 4 to 5 percent as indicative of a healthy economy ([France24](#); [Bloomberg](#)). The United Arab Emirates announced a complete severance of economic ties with Tehran after accusing Iran of firing ballistic missiles into its territory ([Bloomberg](#)).

Emerging markets are projected to drive much of the world's future economic growth, yet fulfilling their infrastructure, climate, and development goals will require trillions of dollars in new investment. Governments, development banks, and private investors are actively working to bridge this substantial financing gap ([Bloomberg](#)).



Pestilence & Global Health

COVID-19 has been found to reactivate dormant viruses within the body, including Epstein-Barr virus, cytomegalovirus, and several herpes viruses. Researchers identified a previously poorly understood viral family strongly associated with long COVID and persistent disability, offering critical insights into why some patients experience prolonged symptoms. In a promising advance, scientists have developed a one-time combination therapy that may potentially eliminate HIV shortly after infection. In newborn nonhuman primates treated within three days of exposure, this regimen—comprising standard antiretroviral drugs, broadly neutralizing antibodies, and additional agents—demonstrated significant efficacy ([ScienceDaily](#); [ScienceDaily](#)).

Natural Disasters & Signs in the Heavens

The United States Geological Survey recorded a magnitude 1.0 earthquake near The Geysers in California and a magnitude 4.8 earthquake near Balangonan in the Philippines ([USGS](#); [USGS](#)).

A magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck near Ende, Indonesia, according to USGS data. Additionally, a green forest fire alert was issued for the Democratic Republic of Congo ([USGS](#); [GDACS](#)).

Middle Eastern Artifacts

Archaeologists have uncovered a complete bath complex in Port Said that was in use for centuries. Plans are underway to restore the ceremonial gateway of the ancient city of Parseh (Persepolis). Excavations in the ancient city of Tralleis, Turkey, revealed a mosaic-floored hall believed to date back nearly 2,000 years to the Roman Empire period. Lauren K. McCormick interviewed the lead excavator about these findings ([BiblePlaces](#); [BiblePlaces](#)).

The Temple Mount Sifting Project has published research on reconstructing the colorful geometric floor patterns of the temple courts, including several new digital reconstructions of the Temple ([BiblePlaces](#)).