

Iran wins concessions from U.S.; Ukraine strikes critical Moscow refinery; Israel refuses to withdraw from Lebanon

Drop Site Daily: June 18, 2026

Iran and Ceasefire

- **U.S. and Iran sign MOU:** Masoud Pezeshkian, President of Iran, and Donald Trump, President of the United States both signed a memorandum of understanding on Wednesday evening, a fact first reported by Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Sharif noted, upon confirming the signature, that the agreement “shall enter into force” immediately, and that, effective Wednesday, the Strait of Hormuz would reopen and the U.S. naval blockade would cease. Trump signed a hard copy of the agreement during a dinner with the French president at the Palace of Versailles, while Pezeshkian signed a copy in Tehran and later shared a photo of the document on his official X account, describing it as “a historic document.” In an accompanying message, Pezeshkian wrote, “the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been committed to and persistent in pursuing global peace while preserving its dignity and independence.” The signing came ahead of a scheduled meeting with U.S. and Iranian representatives in Switzerland on Friday, though there is conflicting information as to whether the ceremony will still proceed as planned now that the document has been signed by both sides.
- **Key provisions of the U.S.-Iran memorandum of understanding:**
 - “The immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts, including in Lebanon” as well as “ensuring the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon.”
 - An agreement to “negotiate and achieve the final deal in maximum 60 days extendable with mutual consent.”
 - A pledge by the United States to begin lifting its naval blockade immediately and “fully end the naval blockade within 30 days.”
 - An Iranian commitment to facilitate the safe passage of commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz “with no charge for 60 days only” after which Iran can “define the future administration and maritime services” through the strait.
 - A U.S. undertaking, with regional partners, to develop a reconstruction and economic development plan worth at least \$300 billion for Iran.
 - A commitment by Washington to “terminate all types of sanctions” against Iran.

- Iran's reaffirmation that it "shall not procure or develop nuclear weapons," while negotiations continue on uranium enrichment and other nuclear-related issues.
 - U.S. waivers allowing exports of Iranian crude oil and petroleum products, alongside the release of frozen Iranian funds and assets.
 - A provision stating that any final accord will be endorsed by a binding resolution of the United Nations Security Council.
 - The memorandum also states that, pending a final agreement, both parties will "maintain the status quo" while negotiations continue.
- **Trump discusses the MOU at G7 meeting:** At the G7 conference in France on Wednesday, President Trump made a series of comments about Iran, the MOU, Lebanon, and the global energy market.
 - Trump called Iran both "primitive" and "genius," and commended its negotiating team. He also suggested that the U.S. had no right to curtail Iranian missile production. "Am I going to let Saudi Arabia have missiles, but they can't have them?" he asked. "It doesn't work that way."
 - He said he signed the memorandum to avoid a global depression, and that he was particularly motivated to avoid the fate of Herbert Hoover, the president under whom the Great Depression began in the United States.
 - Regarding Lebanon, Trump said peace there would require more work and that Hezbollah must be dealt with "one way or the other." He suggested Syria's new leadership would be willing to confront Hezbollah and praised Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa, saying he had done "a tremendous job" and, unlike Israel, could target the group "with precision." Though he did not say, when asked, that he wanted Israel to halt its military campaign in Lebanon. "I want them to use good judgment," he said.
 - Contrary to the posture he assumed during the conflict, he indicated he was open to a certain level of nuclear enrichment for Iran. "It's a little hard when other people have it, other adjoining states have it, and you're not letting them have it for purposes of electricity and things like that," he said. "You have to use a little common sense."
 - Trump refused to take accountability for the attack in Minab, however, which killed upwards of 170 schoolgirls at the war's outset, saying "mistakes are made" and directing the reporter who asked him about it to his war secretary, Pete Hegseth.
 - **Iran's Ghalibaf addresses end of war, Iran's future:** Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf discussed the MOU on Wednesday at a meeting with the country's Chamber of Commerce.
 - Ghalibaf argued that current negotiations with the United States differ from previous rounds, including during the JCPOA era, because they are now backed by Iran's battlefield victories. "Today the banner of victory on the battlefield stands behind the talks," he said. He also noted that Iran continued responding militarily to U.S. and Israeli actions during negotiations, saying that diplomacy must be conducted "from a

position of strength.” Ghalibaf also suggested that Iran would not cease to respond should Washington violate its commitments.

- The parliamentary speaker maintained that the Strait of Hormuz would “never return to its previous condition,” and that Iran possesses sovereign rights in the Strait as a consequence of its proximity. It is “natural,” he argued, that it might receive payment for services provided there.
- He also said Iran expects access to its frozen assets through credit facilities that would place spending authority in the hands of the Central Bank, allowing it to finance imports and open letters of credit as it deems necessary.
- He also claimed that three European countries that previously violated the JCPOA, pushed to blacklist Iran’s Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist organization, and sought the overthrow of the Islamic Republic are now pursuing talks with Tehran aimed at lifting sanctions
- Ghalibaf, who serves as a special representative for China, also met Wednesday with members of Iran’s Chamber of Commerce to discuss expanding long-term economic cooperation with Beijing, telling attendees the two countries are “true partners in every sense of the word” and that both would be present in any future regional alliance.
- **Trump defends Iran deal amid criticism:** Shortly after returning to Washington from the G7 summit early Thursday, Trump defended the MOU reached with Iran, pushing back against critics who argued the agreement did not represent a meaningful victory for the U.S. In a post on Truth Social, Trump wrote that those who believe he had not been tough enough on Iran were “either jealous, bad people, or stupid,” while pointing to record highs in the stock market and falling oil prices as evidence of the deal’s success.
- **Oil and LNG tankers pass through Strait of Hormuz:** Three Saudi-flagged supertankers carrying a combined six million barrels of crude oil transited the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday, according to Maritime tracking data. French-flagged LNG carrier Mraikh also became the first French vessel to pass through the strait since the outbreak of the war in the region. According to tracking platform MarineTraffic, operated by data firm Kpler, the vessel departed the Gulf carrying 76,353 tonnes of liquefied natural gas, loaded at Ras Laffan Industrial City in Qatar, and was bound for Port Qasim in Pakistan.

Lebanon

- **Killed and wounded:** At least 3,884 people have been killed, and 11,856 wounded, in Israeli attacks on Lebanon since March 2, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry.
- **Israeli drone strikes kill three, injure two on Thursday:** Three people were killed in separate Israeli drone strikes in southern Lebanon on Thursday, according to the state’s National News Agency. Two men were killed when an Israeli drone targeted their vehicle in their hometown of Kfartebnit, while another man was killed in a strike in the town of

Zebdine. In a separate incident, an Israeli drone struck the town of Beit Yahun, wounding two people.

- **Israeli military says it will maintain occupation of southern Lebanon:** The Israel military issued a statement on Thursday saying it would continue operations in southern Lebanon, publishing a map showing what it claimed were its current positions in a so-called “security zone” extending about 10 kilometers into Lebanese territory. “IDF forces have established themselves in their area of operations in southern Lebanon and continue to operate to remove threats and improve protection for residents of the north,” the military said.
- **Israeli soldier killed, 7 wounded in southern Lebanon:** An Israeli reservist soldier was killed and seven other troops, including senior officers, were wounded after a Hezbollah explosive device detonated in southern Lebanon on Wednesday afternoon, the Israeli military said via the Times of Israel.
 - Israel continued its offensive to seize the Ali al-Taher heights, in violation of a U.S.-Iran deal that includes a clause calling for a halt to Israeli attacks on Lebanon.
 - Hezbollah also fired rockets at Israeli military positions near Kfar Tebnit and Houla in southern Lebanon prompting repeated interceptor launches from Israeli forces.
- **Hezbollah’s Qassem rejects disarmament:** Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem said that the group will not surrender its weapons under any future deal with Israel, in an address on Wednesday delivered at the shrine of his slain predecessor Hassan Nasrallah.
 - Qassem demanded full implementation of the 2024 ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanon, including a full Israeli withdrawal and the return of displaced residents, while rejecting direct talks with Israel as “humiliating dictates imposed under fire.”
 - He cast the fight as existential, pointing to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s stated ambition for a “Greater Israel” and saying “we are not fighting for a piece of land. We are defending our existence.”
 - Qassem also welcomed the understanding reached between Tehran and Washington, describing it as a “great victory” and a “pivotal point” for Lebanon. He thanked Iran for “linking the Lebanese arena” to the deal and “forcing Israel to stop its aggression” against Lebanon.
- **UNICEF: 247 children killed in Lebanon since March:** At least 247 children have been killed and 992 injured in Israeli attacks on Lebanon since March, averaging 12 children killed or maimed each day, according to UNICEF. In a statement issued Wednesday following the announcement of a U.S.-Iran memorandum of understanding, UNICEF’s Lebanon representative, Marcoluigi Corsi, said, “We hope that this ceasefire will be indeed a real ceasefire because since the declaration of the previous one, violence against children and the conflict hasn’t really stopped.” Meanwhile, the UN said its peacekeeping mission, UNIFIL, has observed increased military activity in southern Lebanon, including Israeli armored movements, engineering operations, and repeated airspace violations.

Palestine

- **Killed and wounded:** Over the last 24 hours, two Palestinians were killed and eight were injured in Israeli attacks across Gaza. The total recorded death toll since October 7, 2023 has risen to 73,018 killed, with 173,273 injured, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health. Since October 11, the first full day of the so-called ceasefire, Israel has killed at least 1,007 Palestinians in Gaza and wounded 3,165, while 784 bodies have been recovered from under the rubble.
- **Israeli attacks kill two in Gaza City, wound fisherman and woman:** Two Palestinians were killed and several others wounded on Thursday after an Israeli drone strike targeted a civilian vehicle in the Al-Rimal neighborhood west of Gaza City, according to Wafa. In a separate incident, a Palestinian fisherman sustained serious injuries after Israeli naval forces opened fire off the coast of Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza. An Israeli army gunshot also wounded a woman west of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.
- **Two Palestinians killed in Gaza Wednesday:** Two Palestinians were killed and several others wounded Wednesday evening when an Israeli drone struck a group of people on the beach in the Al-Mawasi area west of Khan Younis, Palestinian Online reported.
- **More than 50 Palestinian Bedouin communities displaced since late 2023:** More than 50 Palestinian Bedouin and herding communities in the occupied West Bank have been forcibly displaced since late 2023 due to Israeli settlement expansion and military restrictions, according to the results of a survey released Thursday by the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) in cooperation with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, and reported by Anadolu. Speaking at the launch of the survey findings, ICHR Director General Ammar Dweik stressed the need for legal protection and sustained investment to strengthen the resilience of these communities against Israeli policies, including home demolitions, land seizures, restrictions on movement, settler violence, and the erosion of livelihoods.
- **UN Chief warns settler groups could face blacklisting over violations against Palestinian children:** UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that Israeli settler groups could be added to a global blacklist for grave violations against children if the high number of abuses persists into 2026, citing a sharp rise in attacks affecting Palestinian children. The United Nations' annual Children and Armed Conflict report documented the killing of at least 57 children in the occupied West Bank during 2025. While Israel already appears on the report's "list of shame" for grave violations against children, the latest edition highlights settlers for the first time as a group that could be listed separately in the future. Guterres said he was "appalled" by the scale of violations against children in the occupied Palestinian territory, and expressed deep concern over a "staggering increase" in settler attacks. The report attributed 9,465 grave violations to Israeli forces and 326 to settlers.
- **Israel expands attacks on Palestinians near the "yellow line":** Israel has steadily been expanding its area of control in Gaza beyond the bounds of the October ceasefire, pushing the so-called "yellow line" demarcating its territory from 53% of the enclave to over 60%, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly ordering the army to seize 70%.

Residents of Gaza City's Al-Tuffah neighborhood described tanks, gunfire, and quadcopter strikes accompanying the line's advance on June 15, forcing families to flee with what belongings they could carry. Palestinians have been subject to near-daily gunfire from newly built military bases atop 25 kilometers of earth berms overlooking displacement camps like Halawa in Jabaliya, where residents described being shot while collecting water. "No one is paying attention to us," one resident of Al-Tuffah told Drop Site. "Every day we wish for death. Every day we wish to die, to be done with this life." **Read more from Drop Site contributors Abdel Qader Sabbah and Mohamed Ahmed here.**

U.S. News

By Julian Andreone, with Ryan Grim. Have a tip on Capitol Hill? Email Andreone at Julian@dropsitenews.com.

- **Hegseth announces six-month review of U.S. forces in Europe, lambasts NATO allies:** U.S. War Secretary **Pete Hegseth** on Thursday announced a six-month Pentagon review of American forces in Europe in Brussels, telling NATO counterparts the review's outcome will depend on how quickly Europeans take "primary responsibility for the defense of Europe," warning "it's a review that some countries will fail and others will pass with flying colors." Hegseth also criticized European allies for denying U.S. forces access to bases for launching attacks on Iran, calling it "shameful," and railed against European migration and gender equality policies.
 - Separately, NATO's Nuclear Planning Group issued its first statement in 19 years on Thursday morning, affirming that U.S. nuclear weapons will remain in Europe as "the supreme guarantee of Allied security. The group "agreed to continue enhancing NATO's nuclear deterrence mission by modernizing NATO's nuclear capabilities, strengthening its nuclear planning capacity, and adapting to achieve its security interests."
- **Senate threatens to freeze Hegseth's travel budget over Iran school bombing, boat strike videos:** Senate lawmakers are threatening to withhold 75 percent of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's travel budget if the Pentagon doesn't turn over more details on the deadly February bombing of an Iranian girls' school and full videos of lethal strikes in the Pacific Ocean, under provisions tucked into the Senate Armed Services Committee's defense policy bill filed Tuesday. The measure escalates a similar restriction Congress imposed late last year, when the Senate passed and President Donald Trump signed defense legislation that reduced Hegseth's travel budget by 25 percent in an effort to force the department to turn over videos of the Pacific strikes and to meet other demands.
- **Pro-Israel-linked PAC runs ads targeting progressive challenger in Colorado:** A new ad campaign in Colorado's 1st Congressional District is targeting progressive Democratic challenger **Melat Kiros** as ballots are mailed for the June 30 primary, according to a video shared by a New Republic reporter. The ads are being run by Pro-Choice Majority Action PAC, an outside group whose spending has drawn scrutiny over its ties to political networks

associated with Democratic Majority for Israel. Kiros has been a vocal critic of Israel's war in Gaza.

- **ICE appears to buy immigrants' tax ID data from broker, possibly circumventing court order, 404 Media reports:** Immigration and Customs Enforcement appears to be purchasing records related to immigrants' Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers from a data broker, potentially skirting a court order that banned ICE from sourcing such information, according to Sen. **Ron Wyden (D-Ore.)** and government procurement records reviewed by 404 Media. The nearly \$10 million contract, signed June 5 with Thundercat Technology LLC for "ITIN data subscription and analytics for HSI agents in fraud investigations," follows two separate court rulings blocking a prior IRS-DHS data-sharing agreement as unlawful, with Wyden saying "it looks for all the world like Trump is trying to skirt the law and a court order to fuel his mass-deportation campaign." The purchase continues a pattern in which ICE and other DHS agencies have bought commercially available data, including smartphone location information, rather than obtaining it through warrants.
- **Anti-Genocide Super PAC Spending Tops \$2M for Darializa and Claire Valdez:** The new American Priorities super PAC, organized primarily by Muslim Americans aiming to combat the influence of AIPAC, is out with a new ad featuring Mayor Zorhan Mamdani's support of congressional candidates **Dariliaza Avila Chevalier** and **Claire Valdez**. A source tells Drop Site at least \$800,000 is being put behind the ad. The election is Tuesday, June 23.
- **Mamdani Foe and Ultra Zionist Scott Stringer Behind New Spending Against Claire Valdez:** On May 22, former mayoral candidate **Scott Stringer**, who has close ties to the city's real-estate industry, expressed alarm at the rise of **Claire Valdez**. "Omg. This can't be happening," he posted in response to Valdez signaling her opposition to allowing New York nonprofits to fund illegal settlements. On Wednesday, Jewish Insider revealed that Stringer is a lead fundraiser for two PACS, Progressive Unity Fund and Fight Back NYC, which are spending heavily against Valdez and for her opponent **Antonio Reynoso**, as well as against **Darializa Avila Chevalier** and in support of her opponent, incumbent **Adriano Espaillat**. The PAC has also received almost \$200,000 from the **American Federation of Teachers**.
- **Khanna signs Track AIPAC pledge rejecting pro-Israel lobby money:** Rep. **Ro Khanna (D-Calif.)** announced on Wednesday's "Breaking Points" that he would sign Track AIPAC's new Peace Pledge rejecting money from AIPAC, Democratic Majority for Israel, the Republican Jewish Coalition, Christians United for Israel, and affiliated groups. The pledge also commits signers to acknowledge Israel's actions in Gaza as genocide, enforce the Leahy Law, oppose Section 224 of the NDAA—which Khanna said would fuse U.S. and Israeli military production—and to defend the speech rights of those who criticize Israel.
- **Senators address U.S. intelligence sharing with Israel:** Drop Site Capitol Hill correspondent **Julian Andreone** asked senators on Capitol Hill what they make of Section 622—a provision buried in the Senate's intelligence authorization bill that would lock in expanded intelligence sharing with Israel and make it nearly impossible to scale back. Under the amendment, intelligence sharing with Israel can't be suspended or reduced unless the president personally determines there's a "specific and identifiable national security concern." The Senate Intelligence Committee approved the legislation including this

provision by a vote of 14-3; it now awaits a debate and vote on the Senate floor. **See their responses here.**

- **Knicks accept White House invitation:** The New York Knicks have accepted an invitation to visit the White House to celebrate their first championship in more than 50 years, team owner **James Dolan** said Wednesday in a radio interview, making them the first NBA team to visit during either of President Donald Trump's terms. A White House official said the administration has been in communication with the team and expects to host them soon, though no date has been set. The visit comes after Trump attended Game 3 of the finals at Madison Square Garden, where he was booed when shown on the video board in the Knicks' lone loss of their five-game series win over the San Antonio Spurs.

Other International News

- **Somaliland denies Israeli military base, says Israel training its police and military:** Somaliland Defense Minister Mohamed Yusuf Ali claimed Wednesday that Israel does not have a base in Somaliland but is training its police and military forces, Reuters reported, as the breakaway territory appealed for Israeli investment in agriculture and other sectors. Yusuf Ali was part of a delegation visiting Israel as part of Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi's first official visit to the country since Israel formally recognized Somaliland's independence in December. Somalia has called Israel's recognition of Somaliland's statehood a "deliberate attack" on its sovereignty. After meeting with Abdullahi, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said he was looking to deepen security, economic and diplomatic ties with Somaliland, noting "for many years we cooperated under the radar in a series of operations that will remain secret."
- **Lula warns Trump against interfering in Brazil's election:** Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva warned Wednesday that the United States should not interfere in Brazil's October presidential race, saying at the G7 summit in Evian-les-Bains, France, that while President Donald Trump is entitled to his relationship with the Bolsonaro family, "don't meddle in the Brazilian elections, because the Brazilian elections are a Brazilian problem."
 - Lula, seeking a fourth term in a race with rival Senator Flávio Bolsonaro, spoke days after Flávio's brother Eduardo was sentenced to four years in prison for illegally lobbying the Trump administration to support their father, former President Jair Bolsonaro.
 - Trump, who has imposed tariffs and sanctions in response to Jair Bolsonaro's 27-year sentence for seeking to overturn his election defeat, appeared to confuse Eduardo with Flávio at the summit and described Brazil as having become "a little rough" and "dangerous" politically.
 - Lula dismissed Trump's criticism of Brazil's electronic voting machines, calling paper ballots a technology "of the last century," and said of Trump, "I think he doesn't know Brazil very well."

- **Ukraine strikes critical Moscow refinery:** Ukrainian drones hit a Moscow oil refinery for the second time this week while Russia fired ballistic missiles at Kyiv, as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy seeks support from the United States and Europe to end the war.

 - The refinery supplies roughly 40 percent of the capital's petroleum and other oil products and was still burning on Thursday, according to Al Jazeera. Drone strikes also damaged a residential building and private houses in the surrounding region and forced Sheremetyevo Airport to suspend flights.
 - A Russian air attack killed at least one person in the northeastern Ukrainian city of Sumy on Thursday, according to authorities from the region.
 - Separately, Zelenskyy said he secured G7 commitments including additional air defense missiles, production licenses, and a winter support package, while G7 leaders pledged to tighten sanctions on Russia's oil and gas sectors and Trump said he would "do whatever I can" to end the war.
- **Colombian activist Beto Coral detained by ICE:** Homeland Security Investigations agents detained Colombian activist Beto Coral, a vocal supporter of President Gustavo Petro with a pending asylum claim and U.S. work permit, outside his Arizona home Tuesday. An agent said the order came from Secretary of State Marco Rubio, according to Coral. The arrest came days after Coral traveled to Miami to monitor overseas voting and protest right-wing candidate Abelardo de la Espriella, who posted a cryptic message about "good news" for Colombians abroad hours before the detention became public. Petro called the arrest political persecution and directed Colombia's foreign ministry to seek information on the case.
- **Taiwanese president urges quick U.S. approval of \$14 billion arms sale:** Taiwan's President William Lai Ching-te said on Thursday that he hopes the United States approves a \$14 billion arms sale "as soon as possible," reiterating that the island "rejects unification" with China. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in May that the deal was "under review," and a top U.S. military official said last month Washington was pausing the sale to conserve munitions for its war on Iran. Lai has championed increased defense spending, though Taiwan's parliament last month approved only two-thirds of his proposed \$40 billion defense budget, cutting funds meant for drones and domestically produced weapons.

 - Taiwan's defense ministry announced Thursday that it would propose a separate \$6.64 billion package for surveillance and small unmanned surface drones.
- **U.N. Chief Guterres in Haiti:** U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres traveled to Port-au-Prince this week for a one-day visit, confronting a nation in the grip of a record-breaking humanitarian crisis. Amidst surging gang violence that has displaced over 300,000 residents in the capital alone, Guterres toured the headquarters of the newly deployed international Gang Suppression Force. With 2,300 people killed so far this year and 1.5 million facing displacement, the U.N. chief criticized the indifference of the international community toward Haiti's situation. While he urged global action, the mission faces intense skepticism due to past international military interventions that left behind a legacy of abuse and instability.

- **North Korea recalls UK envoy over children's camp sanctions:** North Korea has recalled its ambassador and downgraded ties with Britain to the chargé d'affaires level after the UK sanctioned the Songdowon International Children's Camp in May. London says the camp supported Russia's program for the forced deportation and re-education of Ukrainian children. Pyongyang called the sanctions a "heinous" political provocation and said full diplomatic relations will not resume until they are lifted.