

# U.S. imposes new Cuba sanctions; Progressive wins California special election; Congo Ebola outbreak “growing exponentially”

Drop Site Daily: August 21, 2026

## Palestine

- **15-year-old boy dies after being shot in the head by Israel in Gaza:** A 15-year-old Palestinian boy died on Thursday after being shot by Israeli troops in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza. Footage appears to show him shot in the head.
- **Israeli forces and settlers kill two Palestinians, wound several others in occupied West Bank attacks:**

- **Hebron:** A 17-year-old Palestinian boy was [killed](#) after being shot in the chest by armed Israeli settlers during an attack on homes in Khirbet Hamroush, northeast of Hebron, WAFA reported. A 70-year-old man was also shot and wounded, and settlers burned down a home. In southern Hebron, settlers [attacked](#) homes near Al-Dhahiriya and Al-Samu, injuring five Palestinians, stealing sheep and attacking a Palestinian Red Crescent ambulance, preventing it from reaching the wounded. Israeli forces later arrested four Palestinians in Shaab Al-Butum, including a father and son, and three others during a raid on Beit Ummar.

- **Jenin:** Israeli forces [shot and killed](#) Fathi Hazem, a 58-year-old retired police colonel in the Palestinian National Security Forces, during a raid on his home in central Jenin and withheld his body. An eyewitness told AFP, “They shot him seven times in front of his 10-year-old son. They dragged him down the stairs and took him with them.” Two of Hazem’s other sons were killed by the Israeli military in 2022. In Zababdeh, south of Jenin, Israeli forces shot a 14-year-old boy in the chest and back during a raid. Israeli forces also hung Israeli flags along several points of the Jenin–Nablus road.

- **Nablus:** Israeli settlers attacked the Bula Al-Hawa area, east of Nablus, [beating](#) a Palestinian.

- **Drop Site reports on detained Palestinian journalist:** After more than two years in Israeli detention, the first photo of Palestinian journalist Mohammed Arab emerged on

Monday. Israeli forces seized Arab from Gaza's Al-Shifa Medical Complex on March 18, 2024.

- “They are calling on us using the quadcopters. Pray for me, and take care of the children,” Arab told his wife Wafaa Abu Al-Laban in their final conversation.
- “Mohammed’s health is very, very poor,” Abu Al-Laban told Drop Site’s Abdel Qader Sabbah. Arab was subjected to severe abuse at Sde Teiman and forced to remain on his knees for prolonged periods, causing a slipped disc and serious back problems. His eyesight also deteriorated after his glasses were taken away, his lawyer said.
- After more than two years in detention, Arab told his lawyer that seeing his own face had become a dream. “I just want to know what I look like,” he said. A petition had to be filed to obtain underwear and a mirror for him.
- **Watch Abdel Qader Sabbah’s video report on Mohamed Arab for Drop Site [here](#).**
- **Hamas is “fully committed” to Board of Peace roadmap, official says:** Basem Naim, a senior Hamas official, [told](#) CNN on Thursday that the group remains fully committed to the “agreed version” of the “Board of Peace” roadmap for Gaza, noting that the group believes that the roadmap satisfactorily handles the decommissioning of its weapons, the future of its tunnels, and implementation timelines.
- President Donald Trump’s envoy Nickolay Mladenov had pledged to secure Israel’s approval for the deal, Naim said, but Israel has since rejected the deal and carried out massacres in Gaza in a deliberate attempt to derail it.
- Naim also [told](#) CNN that Board of Peace mediators and Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner are asking Hamas to be “sensitive” to Benjamin Netanyahu’s political position ahead of Israel’s upcoming election over the already-agreed Gaza roadmap. “As a Palestinian, I am not in a position to pay the price from the bodies and blood and the lives of our people in order to secure the victory of Netanyahu’s election,” Naim noted to CNN in response.
- **Qatar, Turkey, and Egypt condemn Israeli attacks on Gaza:** Qatar, Egypt, and Turkey “strongly [condemned](#)” recent Israeli attacks on Gaza that have killed civilians, including women and children, in a joint statement Wednesday.
- The statement said the intensification of Israeli attacks “undermines regional and international efforts at a critical juncture,” as work continues to implement the plan to end the war, including the Board of Peace’s meeting with Israeli officials. They stressed

that Israel must “fully comply with all its obligations under the ceasefire agreement” and refrain from actions that could escalate tensions.

· **European leaders condemn Israeli settlement expansion:** The leaders of the UK, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Canada [condemned](#) Israel’s decision to issue construction tenders for the E1 settlement project in the occupied West Bank in a joint statement on Thursday.

- The statement urges Israel to “retract these plans immediately” and halt settlement expansion.

- It also warns businesses not to bid on the tenders, citing possible “legal and reputational consequences” and the risk of involvement in “serious breaches of international law.”

· **Turkey seeks Interpol red notice for Netanyahu over Global Sumud Flotilla attack:** Turkey [asked](#) Interpol to issue a red notice for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the Israeli attack on activists aboard the Global Sumud Flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza, Justice Minister Akin Gürlek said Friday via Anadolu Agency. Gürlek said proceedings are continuing before an Istanbul court against 35 defendants over the attack in international waters and the detention of activists.

- Arrest warrants were issued for Netanyahu and Israeli official Afek Moskovitch on July 14 on charges including genocide, crimes against humanity, torture, aggravated deprivation of liberty and hijacking, prompting the Justice Ministry to request Interpol red notices.

· **Three Palestinian parties in Israel revive Joint List ahead of October Knesset election:** Three Palestinian parties in Israel, Hadash, Balad, and Ta’al, [announced](#) a reconstituted Joint List on Wednesday ahead of the October 27 Knesset election.

- The list will be led by Hadash’s Yousef Jabareen, followed by Ta’al’s Ahmad Tibi and Balad’s Sami Abu Shehadeh, with the parties targeting at least 10 seats and competing against the United Arab List led by Mansour Abbas.

- Balad deputy secretary-general Yousef Tatur said the party made concessions to reach the agreement given “the gravity of the current moment,” citing Israel’s genocide in Gaza, West Bank displacement, and attacks in Jerusalem, and called on Palestinian voters with Israeli citizenship who are eligible to vote to help “turn unity into a real force on the ground.”

# Iran

· **U.S. threatens countries trading with Iran with “economic oblivion”:** U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent [said](#) on Thursday that Washington would impose the “toughest sanctions in history” on Iran following Trump’s declaration of “economic warfare.”

· “The economic pressure means that we are going to all of our allies, and this is going to be the greatest coordinated economic isolation in the history of the world,” Bessent told CNBC, noting that all countries will now be judged as “either with us or against” the U.S. based on their economic relationship with Iran.

· “If you insist on doing business with them, either transferring money or buying their oil, they are doing seaborne ship transfers, then the US Treasury and the U.S. government, they will put its full might and force toward enforcing against you,” Bessent told CNBC.

· Separately, Bessent [noted](#) his confusion at rising oil prices, saying that the U.S. had “asymmetric information” and he was “not sure why oil has popped up on this.”

· Vice President JD Vance said Thursday that the war with Iran had entered “a new phase where the most effective tool we have is the economic pressure we can impose on them.” “It will be a delicate dance,” he added, because Iran “will try to put economic pressure on us.”

· Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf called for a plan to overcome what he described as “cruel sanctions” following the U.S. Treasury announcement. Speaking during a visit to Iraq, Ghalibaf said Iran and other Muslim countries possess significant resources and raw materials that their “enemies are coming to plunder,” and urged Baghdad to cooperate with Tehran in confronting the sanctions.

· **China registers opposition to U.S. economic campaign against Iran:** Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian [said](#) on Friday that the newest round of U.S. economic pressure would “not help to resolve” the conflict in the Middle East.

· Lin called on all sides to address tensions through political and diplomatic means.

· China has repeatedly rejected unilateral U.S. sanctions, arguing that measures not authorized by the UN Security Council lack standing in international law.

· **Oil traffic through Hormuz remains constrained:** Kpler [recorded](#) 10.73 million barrels of west-to-east liquid tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz from August 14–20, an

average of just 1.53 million barrels per day, a sharp contrast from the 10 million barrels per day figure that two U.S. officials gave Axios.

- Only 14 outbound tankers were observed during the entire week, with no recorded traffic on August 14 or 17, according to the maritime tracking firm.
- Kpler cautions that its figures may change as more vessel-position data becomes available, including from ships traveling with their tracking systems switched off. But the currently observed traffic is nowhere near the scale Washington described.
- **Iranian crude oil offers to Chinese buyers decline:** Offers of Iranian crude to Chinese buyers have fallen this week, Reuters [reported](#) on Friday, while prices have jumped.
  - The number of planned deliveries for September and October declined from July and August, and barrels shipped earlier have already been sold.
  - Crude oil, which is usually sold at a lower price, is now being sold at premiums, Reuters reported.

## Lebanon

- **Israeli army continues attacks in Lebanon despite “ceasefire” agreement:** Israeli forces [set off](#) a “massive explosion,” conducted in two stages, in the area between the towns of Arnoun and Kfar Tebnit, in the Nabatieh district in southern Lebanon, the Lebanese National News Agency reported on Friday.
  - In Tyre (Sour), Israeli attacks were [reported](#) in the Mansouri-Majdal Zoun area, according to the NNA, with the Israeli military firing artillery shells on Mansouri.
  - Israeli soldiers also fired on Khiam, where Israeli forces had blown up a house. Israeli warplanes also struck the outskirts of Baraashit, in the Bint Jbeil district, targeting a house, early Friday morning.
  - Israeli forces bombarded the strategic Ali Taher hill in southern Lebanon for more than five hours overnight, with artillery fire beginning after 11 p.m. and continuing until around 5 a.m., L’Orient Today reported.
- **Explosions heard over Tyre as PM Salam tells army its deployment restores state “sovereignty, authority and prestige”:** Explosions were heard over the southern Lebanese city of Tyre (Sour) on Friday as Prime Minister Nawaf Salam [delivered](#) a speech at the Benoit Barakat Barracks, Lebanon’s National News Agency reported. Speaking as Israeli attacks on Lebanon continue, Salam said restoring sovereignty requires “one strong army” and bringing

all of southern Lebanon under the authority of the state. He said the Lebanese state and its constitutional institutions must regain the “decision of war and peace,” describing the army’s deployment in the south as the restoration of state “sovereignty, authority and prestige.”

- **U.S. issues sanctions on Hezbollah:** The U.S. Treasury Department [sanctioned](#) 10 people it says form a network smuggling cash to Hezbollah, and redesignated Hezbollah itself as operating “under the command” of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF), OFAC announced Thursday.

- The Treasury Department accused the network of using couriers on commercial flights between Lebanon, Turkey, the UAE, and Iran to move “up to hundreds of millions of dollars,” giving Hezbollah a channel outside the banking system to obtain foreign currency and evade sanctions.

- A State Department official said the redesignation is meant to show Hezbollah is “not a stand-alone operation” but acts for Iran.

- Hezbollah [responded](#) to the sanctions on Friday morning, rejecting its characterization as “under the command” of the IRGC, adding it did not need anyone to certify its Lebanese identity or patriotism, and describing its relationship with Iran as a “close and fraternal” relationship.

- It described the move as part of longstanding U.S. policies aimed at targeting Hezbollah through political, financial, and security pressure, which it said was intended to “protect the security of the Israeli enemy,” and said the sanctions would “not deter” its fight against Israel.

## U.S. News

- **Progressive Aisha Wahab wins California special election, dealing blow to AIPAC-backed opponent:** State Senator **Aisha Wahab** [defeated](#) transit official **Melissa Hernandez** in the special election to fill former Representative **Eric Swalwell’s** House seat, despite Hernandez’s backing from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee’s super PAC, United Democracy Project, which spent roughly \$2.5 million in the race.

- Wahab, who opposes unconditional aid to Israel and has characterized Israel’s conduct in Gaza as a “genocide,” will represent the district for the remainder of the year.

- **Emails reveal ICE quietly coordinated with Iran on deportation flights:** Newly released emails obtained by the National Iranian American Council show U.S. immigration

officials worked with Iranian government representatives to deport more than 100 Iranians on three flights between September 2025 and January 2026, with Iranian officials influencing which individuals were included on deportation manifests and ICE at times heeding last-minute requests from the Iranian Embassy, according to CBS News.

- The coordination continued even during the June 2025 U.S.-Israel war with Iran. Then-acting ICE Director **Todd Lyons** called Iranian repatriation a “priority” days after President Donald Trump warned Tehran residents to evacuate, and an ICE official described the deportations as a “White House priority” despite Iran’s closed airspace.
- A separate lawsuit filed by Iranian asylum seekers in July alleges ICE illegally shared confidential information with Iranian officials while the migrants were in detention.
- **Trans migrants in ICE detention losing rights, medical care, NYT finds:** The federal government has halted specialized care for transgender detainees at more than 10 immigration detention centers and deleted an Obama-era policy assuring the basic rights of transgender people in immigration custody, according to a Thursday [report](#) from The New York Times.
- **Camila Toro de Paula**, a 25-year-old transgender Venezuelan asylum seeker who has spent 11 months in a men’s facility in Jena, Louisiana, described being assaulted, denied hormone treatment, and held in solitary confinement without consistent water access to the Times.
- Another transgender asylum seeker, **Wilmar Quintero**, who left her native Venezuela after being tortured by police officers for her transgender identity, described being sexually assaulted while detained in Michigan before she was deported in April.
- **DHS spied on at least five Midwest churches amid anti-ICE activist probe, court records show:** Court filings that emerged last week [reveal](#) DHS agents surveilled five churches in Minnesota and Michigan as part of an investigation into activists opposing ICE known as “Operation Puppet Master.”
- Undercover agents attended events at First Universalist Church of Minneapolis and University Baptist Church, with one undercover agent attending a Mixed Martial Arts class at University Baptist Church in May with a hidden audio recorder, and another agent collecting license plate information near St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church in St. Paul during an April activist meeting.
- The revelations raise questions about whether DHS violated a February court injunction barring warrantless enforcement actions at churches.

- **Texas Gov. Abbott targets Muslim washing stations at airports:** Texas Gov. **Greg Abbott** [sent](#) a letter Friday to the heads of Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth airports alleging that their Muslim wudu washing stations constituted “religious discrimination.” Abbott, has consistently pursued anti-Muslim policies, asked the U.S. Department of Transportation to investigate and warned his office is “reviewing all grants” to entities involved, according to The Washington Post.

- **Missouri judge allows Trump-backed congressional map for November election:** Cole County Circuit Judge **Daniel Green** [ruled](#) Wednesday that Missouri’s new Republican-friendly U.S. House districts can be used in November, rejecting a bid by the group People Not Politicians to put the map to a statewide referendum.

- The redistricting, prompted by President Donald Trump’s push for Republican-led states to redraw boundaries ahead of the midterms, targets Democratic Rep. **Emanuel Cleaver** by splitting Kansas City among Republican-held districts and extending his 5th District into rural GOP territory, with about 59% of the district’s voters newly assigned under the plan.

- People Not Politicians executive director **Richard von Glahn** said the group plans to appeal to the Missouri Supreme Court.

- Missouri’s fight joins roughly a dozen lawsuits nationally over redistricting efforts that could net Republicans up to 16 additional House seats across eight states.

- **Research finds over 150 Polymarket wallets likely traded on inside U.S. military information:** More than 150 wallets on Polymarket International [appear](#) to have traded on insider U.S. military information, collectively earning \$8 million with a 97.2% win rate on defense-related bets, according to research from the nonprofit Anti-Corruption Data Collective.

- ACDC also found that bets from these accounts appear to attract copycat wagers from larger traders and automated bots, including \$200,000 and \$100,000 copycat bets placed hours before June 2025 U.S. strikes on Iran.

- **Private prison giant GEO Group donated \$1.4 million to pro-Trump PAC after landing major ICE contracts:** GEO Group’s reentry services division contributed \$1.4 million to MAGA Inc., a super PAC supporting President Donald Trump, in July, according to Federal Election Commission records reviewed by The Lever, just weeks after the company secured two five-year Department of Homeland Security contracts to operate ICE detention facilities in Colorado and North Carolina worth a combined estimated \$165 million in annual revenue.

- The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment recently sued GEO Group, forcing the company to allow state inspectors to investigate a tuberculosis outbreak at one of its facilities.
- More on the GEO Group's political activities is available from The Lever [here](#).

 Have a tip on Capitol Hill? Email DC Correspondent Julian Andreone at [Julian@dropsitenews.com](mailto:Julian@dropsitenews.com)

## Other International News

- **Ebola virus outbreak in DRC “growing exponentially”:** The Ebola virus outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is “growing exponentially,” the UN warned on Friday. Julien Harneis, the UN's Senior Ebola Coordinator, said in a [statement](#) that more than 2,500 people had died in the last three months, with over half of all deaths occurring in just the last 20 days. “The epidemic is spreading to an area that is bigger than France. And the outbreak is growing faster and wider than the Ebola response,” Harneis said. He also stressed the “brutal” conditions facing healthcare workers with 160 healthcare workers contracting Ebola, with 43 dying.
- **U.S. imposes new Cuba sanctions, detains Americans returning from island:** The Treasury and State departments [announced](#) new sanctions Thursday against nine Cuban state-owned mining, metal, and construction companies, and on the leadership of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, which Secretary of State Marco Rubio accused of sponsoring “a vast subversive network in the United States aimed at identifying, cultivating, and radicalizing” Americans, according to the Associated Press.
  - The move follows an operation at the Miami airport last weekend in which several Americans returning from Cuba after attending events marking Fidel Castro's 100th birthday were briefly detained and had electronic devices seized for inspection.
  - Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez said that the U.S. imposed the sanctions with the “deliberate aim of harming” the country's economy “to prevent the provision of basic services to the population.” The measures add to an oil blockade the U.S. imposed earlier this year following the removal of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro, which has resulted in regular blackouts and medical shortages on the island.
- **Imran Khan sent back to prison hours after hospital visit:** Former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan was briefly [hospitalized](#), declared medically fit, and returned to prison within hours early Friday, a move his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party said violated a Supreme Court order requiring him to remain under medical supervision until at least mid-September.

- Khan's sister, Uzma Khan, said he told her he was being "repeatedly" tortured in prison, and party officials accused authorities of "contempt of the Supreme Court" after Khan was examined at a state-run hospital, contrary to a court order mandating that he be treated at a private facility.

- Khan has been imprisoned since August 2023 on charges he has characterized as "politically motivated." PTI officials have announced a nationwide march, planned to take place on September 27, in response to his medical deterioration.

- Separately, Zulfikar Bukhari, a top aide to Khan, told Reuters on Thursday that the former PM would not confront army chief Asim Munir if freed, marking a significant shift in rhetoric from a party whose supporters have long rallied against the military leader they blame for Khan's 2023 imprisonment.

- **Hundreds protest against Tunisian President Kais Saied:** Hundreds of protesters [marched](#) in Tunis Thursday calling for President Kais Saied's ouster and rejecting what they called "one-man rule" and "a slide towards dictatorship," urging the release of jailed opposition figures, activists, and journalists, Al Jazeera reported.

- The demonstration follows a similar protest on July 25 marking the anniversary of Saied's 2021 dismissal of the government and suspension of parliament.

- Saied, a 68-year-old former constitutional lawyer elected in 2019 on an anti-corruption platform, has faced international criticism for consolidating control over the judiciary and overseeing mass trials of political opponents.

- The country has been racked by mounting economic pressure, with inflation at 5.2%, according to the World Bank. Protests have also emerged in response to widespread water and power cuts, and the environmental problems that accompanied wildfires that hit the country earlier this summer.

- **HRW: Russian paramilitaries "summarily killed" nine Mali civilians, including four children:** Human Rights Watch [said](#) Thursday that Russia's Africa Corps summarily killed nine civilians, including four children, in Mali's central Mopti region in the presence of Malian soldiers earlier last month, alleging the paramilitary group also beat dozens of people and burned at least eight homes.

- HRW said more than 100 Africa Corps fighters rounded up at least 80 men and boys in Bombori village on July 10, beating them while interrogating them about alleged ties to armed groups, before shooting six who tried to escape and executing three others in custody, one allegedly by beheading.

- The killings come amid Mali's ongoing civil war against armed groups linked to al-Qaeda and ISIL, with Russia's Africa Corps having become the country's main military partner since Bamako's relations with Western nations, particularly its former colonizer France, deteriorated following the military's 2021 seizure of power.
- **Ukraine hits Russian oil and power sites in overnight drone barrage, blacking out much of Crimea:** Ukraine [struck](#) a wave of Russian energy targets overnight into Thursday, Aug. 20, in one of its heaviest long-range drone campaigns of the war, hitting oil refineries, a Black Sea export terminal, and a substation feeding occupied Crimea, according to Ukraine's General Staff. Ukrainian drones struck a substation in Krasnodar Krai, which provides Russian-occupied Crimea with much of its power, leading to a blackout in the area overnight. Drones also struck an export terminal at Volna and a refinery in Tatarstan.
- **RSF attacks kill six, displace over 1,000 in Sudan's North Kordofan:** Rapid Support Forces fighters [raided](#) the villages of Um Dareisa and Al-Shaqila in Sudan's North Kordofan state Wednesday, killing six civilians and forcing more than 1,000 people to flee on foot to the state capital El Obeid, Sudan Tribune reported. A local official accused RSF fighters of widespread abuses in the area in recent days, including unlawful killings, physical assaults, sexual violence, looting supplies at gunpoint, and forced displacement. The attack follows a raid last week on the nearby town of Um Arda that killed 18 people and displaced more than 300 families.
- **U.S. deportees arrive in Liberia:** Twenty people deported from the United States [arrived](#) at Roberts International Airport outside Monrovia on Thursday, the first group transferred under a \$5 million deal allowing the U.S. to send up to 1,200 third-country deportees to Liberia over the next year. Liberian officials said the group will include people from Africa, North and South America, and the Caribbean, but most of the first arrivals came from Latin America, including Venezuela and Cuba.
- **Syria weighs joining security pact with Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia:** Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani said Damascus was [reviewing](#) whether to join the trilateral "Mecca Joint Defence Agreement" between Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, but has not yet made a decision. Speaking on a state visit to Islamabad, al-Shaibani said Syria was seeking to deepen ties with Pakistan, with the two sides moving toward exchanging ambassadors, establishing direct flights and reviving a joint ministerial commission.
- **Hong Kong Tiananmen vigil organizers convicted under national security law:** Lee Cheuk-yan and Chow Hang-tung, former leaders of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, were [convicted](#) Friday of inciting subversion, following a national security law imposed on the region by the Chinese government. Both

were charged in 2021 after organizing annual vigils in commemoration of China's 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. Lee and Chow now face up to 10 years in prison.

- **Judge rules Palestine Action did not violate UK terrorism laws:** UK Judge Robert Altham ruled on Friday that five Palestine Action activists would not be sentenced under the country's terrorism laws, after the cohort was found guilty in June of causing \$290,000 worth of damage to a Barclays Bank during an August 2024 protest against the bank's shareholdings in the Israeli defense company Elbit Systems.