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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

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Rosh Hashanah at War: Israel's battles, blessings, and the stakes ahead

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Opening Message

Shalom and *Shana Tova u'metukah* — a good and sweet year. As Israel again enters the new year under fire, the spirit of Jewish strength stands out more than ever. In his Rosh Hashanah message, Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir reminded soldiers that “the strong foundations of the IDF are not only rooted in fire-power — but in the spirit of the fighters.” The Prime Minister echoed similar sentiments, calling security forces “the protective wall of the State of Israel” while embracing hostage families and the bereaved.

The backdrop for this Rosh Hashanah includes Gaza advances, emerging Iranian threats, domestic crises, and escalation in Judea and Samaria. International recognition of a Palestinian state coincides with enemy military moves during sacred Jewish holidays—a pattern worth noting closely.

Prayer for 5786: Safety for soldiers, swift hostage return, comfort for bereaved families, and collapse of enemies' plans.

The War Today

IDF Advances in Gaza City

The military pushes deeper into Hamas strongholds, fighting above and below ground while urging civilian evacuation southward. Over 550,000 Palestinians have fled Gaza City according to military figures. The IDF accuses Hamas of blocking civilian departures, robbing UN aid convoys, and using stolen vehicles to obstruct relief routes. Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin emphasized that rescuing 48 hostages remains a central objective.

Civilian Exodus Accelerates

The Jerusalem Post reports more than half of Gaza City's one-million population has evacuated. Hamas attempted to prevent civilian flight, but Israeli ground advances and heavy firepower forced acceleration of departures. Despite limited military resistance, diplomacy faces mounting international Palestinian state recognition. Ten IDF soldiers sustained injuries in a vehicle accident.

Mossad's Iran Operations

Channel 13 reports Mossad deployed approximately 100 non-Israeli operatives inside Iran during June's 12-day conflict. These agents operated smuggled missile systems targeting launchers and air defenses. Netanyahu and senior officials publicly discussed shaping U.S. involvement and striking Iran's nuclear and command assets. Strategic implication: Israel is building persistent operational reach within Iran while coordinating—and sometimes pressuring—Washington.

Iranian Missile Testing

Ynet reports Iran conducted advanced intercontinental ballistic missile tests near Tehran, with visible smoke trails and air defense activity. A senior Iranian lawmaker urged rapid nuclear weapons development and threatened strikes against Israel and the U.S. for challenging Iranian airspace. Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi departed for the UN General Assembly amid heightened regional tensions.

Inside Israel

Food Insecurity Crisis

A Latet survey reveals 2.8 million Israelis, including 1.3 million children, experience food insecurity—rising from 24.9% to 32.1% year-over-year. Two years of conflict and elevated prices squeeze household budgets. The organization calls for a government-led food security authority, noting aid organizations cannot meet surging demand. This reflects a test of *arevut* (mutual responsibility).

IDF Multi-Front Posture

The Times of Israel reports the IDF surged dozens of trainee combat companies to Gaza, the North, and Judea and Samaria through Sukkot following comprehensive multi-front assessment. Central Command chief Maj. Gen. Avi Bluth warned of holiday-season escalation driven by foreign political declarations, lone-wolf inspiration, and olive harvest tensions.

Holiday Amnesty Controversy

The IDF released dozens of imprisoned soldiers ahead of Rosh Hashanah under standing holiday amnesty policy, including several *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) draft evaders. The army stressed routine practice, but critics called the move tone-deaf while over 100,000 reservists remain deployed across Gaza, Lebanon, and border regions. The backlash underscores how draft issues remain raw nerves during wartime.

Medical Innovation

Galilee Medical Center in Nahariya performed deep brain stimulation surgery on a Parkinson's patient using hypnosis instead of anesthesia. Psychologist Dr. Udi Bonshtein guided the patient into imagining a Thai beach while electrodes were implanted during the five-hour procedure. The hospital opened a dedicated hypnosis clinic exploring broader trauma and pain applications.

Israel and the World

Palestinian State Recognition Debate

The Jerusalem Post editorial warns that UK, Canadian, and Australian recognitions send a dangerous message: terrorism pays. Real peace requires Palestinian deradicalization and acceptance of Israel's permanence—no state can emerge without Israeli consent.

UK-Hamas Contact Allegations

Captured Hamas files indicate a British consulate staffer met Hamas figures in Gaza during February 2022, months after London proscribed Hamas in November 2021. The envoy allegedly assured them UK-funded Gaza projects would continue. Britain claims the staffer was summoned by Hamas police and did not violate no-contact policy. The episode exposes potential back-channel communications with designated terror groups holding Israeli hostages.

Amnesty International Internal Conflict

The Free Press reveals internal emails showing Amnesty International staff attempted blocking or delaying publication of a Hamas October 7 massacre report, fearing it might “help Israel in the court of public opinion.” The commission report remains unpublished despite being ordered in 2024, while Amnesty rushed multiple genocide accusations against Israel. The episode exposes NGO politicization.

Islamist Violence Against Christians

The Free Press reports Islamist militias slaughtered over 7,000 Nigerian Christians in 2025, including church burnings, forced displacement, and executions. One survivor (“David”) was tortured and imprisoned after helping Muslim converts escape death. The article warns unchecked extremism does not stop at Israeli Jews or African Christians—Western appeasement risks importing violent intolerance domestically.

Briefly Noted

- IDF Chief Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir visited wounded soldiers at Sheba Medical Center, praising resilience and Israel's “battle of recovery.”
- Ghassan Duhine, deputy head of Gaza's Abu Shabab anti-Hamas militia, issued a handwritten Rosh Hashanah Hebrew greeting to world Jewry, drawing Hamas fury and death threats.
- Palestinians attacked two Israelis near Dayr Jarir, lightly injuring them and stealing sheep; the IDF recovered the flock and dispersed assailants.
- Ramat HaNegev residents warn swarms of Egyptian drones now carry weapons rather than drugs—a trend officials rarely intercept, risking armed terror cells.
- U.S. anti-Israel groups campaign for leniency for Tarek Bazrouk, who pleaded guilty to antisemitic assaults on visibly Jewish New Yorkers and admitted Hamas ties.

- Saudi Arabia pours billions into post-Assad Syria with aid, fuel, and reconstruction to counter Iranian and Hezbollah influence—potentially reshaping Israel's northern front.
- Prosecutors say Elias Rodriguez, charged with murdering Israeli Embassy staffers in Washington, filmed the attack with advance-purchased body camera, underscoring premeditation.
- House Democrats urge UN Secretary-General António Guterres to deploy peacekeepers securing Gaza aid convoys, citing UN data showing most shipments looted or diverted.
- U.S. synagogues brace for High Holy Days under surge of antisemitic violence; rabbis stress determination to gather while security groups warn of “weapons at worship.”
- Israeli wine can blunt economic isolation through export scaling, national wine trails, and appellation completion, argues commentator Adam Scott Bellos, citing \$57.3 million current exports and targeting billions through diaspora demand.

Developments to Watch

- **Iran air-defense airlift:** Iran-Russia “air bridge” moving advanced systems; parallel Chinese shipments could narrow Israel’s strike window. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Karaj base blast:** Explosion rocked control and air-defense site north of Tehran; damage to radar or batteries matters if Iran hardens skies. **STATUS UNCLEAR**
- **Hezbollah deadline:** Lebanese officials report disarmament decision due within weeks or expect broader Israeli strikes. A precision Bint Jbeil hit killed a Hezbollah operative and relatives. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Egyptian buildup denial:** Cairo dismissed Camp David violation reports despite Israeli and Arab media tracking up to 50,000 Sinai troops. PR suggests Egypt fears Washington reaction. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Houthi Rosh Hashanah threat:** Senior Houthi leader hinted holiday attacks; ballistic launch toward Israel reportedly failed overnight. Expect drone-missile salvos timed to religious observance. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Hamas rejects PA rule:** Fatah Gaza spokesman reports Hamas refuses Palestinian Authority governance, undermining foreign “day after” fantasies and maintaining jihadist control.
- **Hostages and executions:** Hamas executed three men near Shifa Hospital with public body display and threats to “mercenaries.” Forty-eight Israeli captives remain underground; diplomacy stalls.
- **IDF remote-demo APCs:** Army fields converted M113 “Zelda” carriers pushing explosive charges, withdrawing, and detonating for two-JDAM equivalent effects while sparing crews in booby-trapped environments.
- **Ashdod rocket pair:** Hamas fired two rockets; one intercepted, one fell in open area with shrapnel hitting city, no injuries reported.

- **West Bank pre-holiday sweep:** IDF surged battalions across Judea and Samaria ahead of Abbas UN speech; seized 90 prepared Molotovs on Hebron rooftop to prevent holiday terror and protect worshipers.
- **UK annexation warning:** London's foreign secretary warned Israel against annexing Judea and Samaria portions post-Palestinian state recognition. Sharp tone underscores how recognition emboldens critics.
- **Jordan aid crossing delay:** Allenby reopened to vehicles, but humanitarian convoys remain frozen pending Jordan's driver screening revision.
- **Measles death in Jerusalem:** Unvaccinated toddler died amid Jerusalem and Beit Shemesh outbreaks—third fatality since wave began. Clinics urge MMR; *pikuach nefesh* applies to public health.
- **Airport taxi strike:** Drivers launched walkout against Uber licensing, warning of industry “death sentence” and snarling holiday travel.
- **Russian jets buzz NATO:** Russian aircraft crossed into Estonian airspace and over Polish Baltic oil platform before NATO fighters interception.

Closing

THE IDF continues deeper Gaza penetration while holding northern and Judea/Samaria lines. Iran accelerates military buildup; foreign “Palestine” recognition emboldens adversaries. Draft crisis and food insecurity remind Israel strength is needed frontline and domestically.

Israel Brief pauses for Rosh Hashanah, resuming Thursday with full coverage. May the holiday bring renewal and strength. *Shana Tova u'metukah* to all readers. May soldiers succeed, hostages return safely, and all schemes against the Jewish people rebound upon makers.

Shana Tova!

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ABOUT MITZPE INSTITUTE

Mitzpe Institute is an intelligence and strategy organization focused on Israeli security, diaspora threat assessment, and the strategic challenges confronting the Jewish people and the West. We produce daily intelligence, forensic analyses, strategic assessments, and tactical briefings read by policymakers, military leaders, and institutional decision-makers across more than 90 countries and all 50 US states — from the Knesset and the US Congress to allied governments, major policy institutions, and Jewish organizational leadership worldwide.

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