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READER EDITION

November 12, 2025

ISRAEL BRIEF

Wednesday, November 12

Rafah's 'pilot' is theater; Lebanon's 'mechanism' is pretend.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE Israel's allies are discovering the cost of cultural cowardice. When democratic parties excuse violence against Jewish speakers and redefine existence as "occupation," the rot has crossed from rhetoric to governance. Jerusalem should deepen security and trade ties with states that still honor reality—India, Greece, the Balkans—and stop mistaking Western sympathy for Western spine. The friendship that matters is the one that fights for truth, not likes.

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Flash Brief

- **Gaza:** IDF kills an armed infiltrator; IAF hits reactivated depots near Beit Lahia.
 - **Rafah:** U.S.–Israel “deportation” plan stalls; no state accepts ~200 tunnel fighters.
 - **Lebanon:** IDF targets Nabatieh/Tyre hubs; LAF still refuses house-to-house searches.
 - **Axis:** Houthis signal pause tied to Gaza; RSF–Libya corridor hardens toward Sinai.
- **Paris:** Macron–Abbas launch PA constitution committee with cash and applause.
 - **Jerusalem:** Death-penalty for terrorist murder clears first reading 39–16 amid floor chaos.
 - **Courts:** High Court pushes external Sde Teiman overseer; censor admits the video was cleared.
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The War Today

Rafah “Pilot” Stalls; Militias Fill the Vacuum

The day opened with another contact kill along the Yellow Line—an armed infiltrator shot dead by Southern Command troops approaching an IDF position under the nominal ceasefire. Within hours, Gaza outlets reported three IAF strikes northeast of Beit Lahia, hitting weapons dumps that Hamas had reactivated during “reconstruction.” At the political level, Jerusalem and Washington announced a “compromise” to deport roughly 200 Hamas tunnel fighters trapped under Rafah, but the deal unraveled instantly: not a single country is willing to take them, leaving the detainees—and the diplomats—underground. While Trump’s envoys spin the impasse as an “interim step,” Egypt has flatly refused to host the men, the UAE has walked away from any stabilization force, and Kushner’s team is running out of verbs.

On the ground, Israel filled the vacuum with facts: the Abu Shabab militia, an anti-Hamas local force that has worked quietly with the IDF since the war began, has been formally tasked with guarding reconstruction in Rafah under direct coordination with Israeli officers. The U.S. State Department scrambled to deny reports that Kushner met Abu Shabab at a base in southern Israel, but the operational shift is real—a pragmatic, Israeli-supervised security belt replacing the stillborn “international” one. Meanwhile, COGAT opened the Zikim crossing for UN-coordinated aid convoys and publicly dismantled UNICEF’s claim that Israel blocks syringes and baby formula, citing daily coordination at the CMCC and data showing hundreds of trucks moving each day. Aid control has become another front: Israel performs, the UN protests, and Hamas steals. Phase Two of Washington’s Gaza plan—multinational policing, PA-free governance, and total disarmament—remains theoretical, while on the map, Gaza is already partitioned between those who keep order and those who trade corpses.

ASSESSMENT

Gaza is bifurcating by behavior, not borders—IDF-policed order versus Hamas-run squalor with diplomats stapled to it. Expect more Yellow Line contact kills, militia guard-duty where Israel stays, and targeted strikes when “ceasefire management” turns into armed escorts. The longer no state takes Washington’s deportee package, the less “day-after” remains and the more “day-of” enforcement hardens into policy.

Hezbollah Rebuilds; Israel Maps It, Hits It, Dares Beirut to Move

The IDF’s Intelligence Directorate went public with what Beirut pretends not to see: a full reconstruction map of Hezbollah’s southern network. Six confirmed precision strikes in Nabatieh this month alone targeted the group’s logistics and command core—depots, safe houses, and the command compounds overseeing the rebuild. In Tyre, Israeli munitions carved through new tunnels and weapons bunkers being built beneath civilian blocks, while smaller operations in Blida and Houla destroyed stockpiles and recovered explosives. The campaign’s rhythm is deliberate—short, surgical bursts that dismantle Hezbollah’s infrastructure while exposing every “residential” shield it hides behind.

Hezbollah deputy chief Naim Qassem responded with his usual bunker sermon, warning that Israeli attacks “cannot continue” and that the ceasefire applies only south of the Litani. He reaffirmed the group will “never give up its weapons” and accused the Lebanese government of collaborating in a plot to weaken “the resistance.” Behind the rhetoric, Hezbollah’s manpower is bleeding; its leadership hides under plastic surgery; and the Lebanese Armed Forces are still refusing to enter private homes for weapons sweeps. U.S. interlocutors quietly admit Beirut’s enforcement plan—limited to open fields and valleys—is cosmetic. Israel’s message is louder and simpler: every house that stores rockets will become an airstrike site, and every denial will shorten the next round’s warning time. With Washington’s 60-day reform ultimatum to Lebanon now ticking, and Israeli planners drafting a broader campaign framework, the north is shifting from deterrence to coercion in real time.

ASSESSMENT

This is coercive counter-rearmament, not tit-for-tat. Israel is stripping Hezbollah’s infrastructure layer by layer and signaling that if the LAF won’t open doors, the IAF will open roofs. Watch for deeper Nabatieh/Tyre hits, more “residential” stockpiles exposed, and a measured expansion in pace until someone in Beirut values state survival over Hezbollah’s face. The countdown is political, but the clock is kinetic.

Iran’s Outer Belt Shifts South: Sahel Corridor, Quiet Houthis, No-Cost Syrian Demands

To Israel’s southwest, the war’s shadow geography is knitting itself together. Sudan’s Rapid Support Forces now control the key crossing points that link Darfur through eastern Chad into Libya’s Kufra basin, where Haftar-aligned militias broker convoys carrying fuel, gold, and weapons north. Egypt, overstretched and wary of internal backlash, lets the pipeline breathe. What began as ad-hoc smuggling is now organized logistics—RSF command nodes at Bir Mirgui coordinating with Libyan brokers to move MANPADS, heavy

machine guns, and vehicles toward Sinai. Israeli intelligence sees it as the new artery feeding Gaza and the jihadist markets beyond. The corridor turns the Sahel into another flank of Iran's proxy economy, financed by oil, gold, and chaos.

To the east, Syria's new strongman Ahmed al-Sharaa paraded through Washington declaring that peace with Israel requires a full withdrawal to pre-2024 lines, a demand that would erase Israel's hard-won southern buffer. He claims Trump "supports the perspective"; Israel calls it what it is—blackmail wrapped in diplomacy. At the same time, the Houthis in Yemen sent Hamas a letter declaring an operational pause in attacks "while Gaza rests," shifting their focus to internal purges and propaganda. They have suspended mass anti-Israel rallies but continue weapons drills and "economic resistance" boycotts. Their message is conditional: the war resumes when Israel does.

ASSESSMENT

The Axis isn't retreating—it's rerouting. Expect more Israeli-Egyptian fusion on Sahel interdiction nodes, financial targeting of RSF-LNA facilitation, and ISR stitched from Bir Mirgui through Kufra to Sinai. The Houthis' "pause" is a reload; Syria's ask is cost-free diplomacy; both sit inside Iran's strategy to keep pressure without paying a price. Treat the corridor as part of the Iran file, not a side quest, and resource it accordingly.

Inside Israel

Sde Teiman Leak Turns Into Systemic Stress Test

Deputy Chief Censor Meir Malka told the Knesset that his office authorized publication of the Sde Teiman detention-video "even with subtitles," undercutting weeks of finger-pointing over how footage of alleged detainee abuse escaped a secure base. At the same time, police questioned MK Zvi Sukkot under caution for breaching the Sde Teiman gate during last year's protest to "stand with soldiers," an inquiry he blasted as political theater meant to distract from the leak itself. Up the chain, the High Court hauled in Justice Minister Yariv Levin and AG Gali Baharav-Miara and all but ruled out both of their preferred overseers for the criminal probe—telling the sides to agree on an outside—or even non-prosecutorial—arbiter by day's end "for the public's sake." From the dais, Constitution Committee chair Simcha Rothman summarized the majority mood: stop sacrificing soldiers to protect institutions that botched this from the start.

ASSESSMENT

The leak fight has metastasized into a legitimacy referendum on the justice system, with the censor's admission demolishing convenient alibis and the High Court signaling it won't rubber-stamp either camp. The smart exit is a truly independent jurist to scrub the process, prosecute real crimes and protect legitimate whistle-blowing—so the IDF can punish abuse and shield fighters from politicized ambushes. Absent that compromise, expect more grandstanding, erosion of trust and a slower rebuild of the military legal corps just as the country needs it most.

Hard Security Reset: Death Penalty Advances, Doctrine Gap Exposed, Courts Second-Guess Local Control

The Knesset punched the terror-penalty throttle, passing the death-penalty for terrorist murderers on first reading 39–16 after Arab MKs were removed for heckling and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir waved a placard and urged automatic capital sentences. The bill—long blocked on “what will the world say” grounds—now has momentum, with coalition and Yisrael Beiteinu aligned and a public still burying its dead. On governance, the State Comptroller dropped a scathing audit: for decades Israel has lacked a binding national security doctrine, leaving the IDF and agencies to improvise force-build and posture without a cabinet-approved compass—an institutional failure laid bare on October 7. He urged the Prime Minister to direct the NSC to deliver a formal strategy within months and submit it to the security cabinet, with five-year reviews baked in. In Judea and Samaria, a district court yanked gate-control from the mayor of Ariel, ordering him to admit Palestinian Authority workers under the regional commander’s rules—an edict that local officials call “a catastrophe” with PA support for the October 7 atrocities at 59% and two Israelis knifed or stoned in recent days. Police ran multi-agency terror-response drills from Kadima-Zoran to Kiryat Shmona; the Health Ministry pushed hospital hardening after missile barrages exposed brittle infrastructure.

ASSESSMENT

The system is groping toward a post-October 7 social contract: sharper deterrence (capital punishment), a long-overdue national compass (NSC doctrine), and firmer perimeter control. But when courts micromanage entry gates in frontline cities, they recreate the “employment for calm” illusion that died in the Gaza envelope. The next 90 days should marry doctrine to deeds—codify mission and money, back commanders on local security calls, and move the death-penalty bill without performative chest-thumping. Credible rule of law is a force multiplier; performative legalism under fire is a liability.

Media And Politics In Flux: Galatz Shake-Up, Trials, Movements on the Board

Defense Minister Israel Katz moved to decouple Army Radio (Galei Tzahal) from civilian current-affairs broadcasting by March 1, 2026, arguing a military-run talk station is an anomaly that drags the IDF into political crossfire; Galgalatz would survive as a soldiers’ music-traffic service. Journalists and opposition figures cried “assault on press freedom,” while even some security stalwarts backed turning Galatz into a non-military public streamer. In the courts, Prime Minister Netanyahu pushed back on the “Case 1000” narrative—calling billionaire Arnon Milchan’s cigars and champagne part of normal friendship, not a bribe—as prosecutors pressed pre-indictment notices over alleged Roche-Israel influence-peddling that could test the line between lobbying and fraud. On the religious-state front, the High Court cemented its ruling mandating women’s access to Chief Rabbinate exams—rebuffing a rehearing bid and effectively opening the door to certified female halachic authorities. And with the political chessboard shifting, Naftali Bennett told a

New York audience he is “running for prime minister right now,” touting a new “Bennett 2026” vehicle. IDF Arabic-spokesman Col. Avichay Adraee bows out after three decades shaping the information fight against Hamas and Hezbollah—a reminder that persuasion has been a front in this war, too.

ASSESSMENT

Domestic institutions are being refitted mid-conflict: pruning a politicized Army Radio, forcing the Rabbinate to recognize merit over gatekeeping, testing the guardrails of lobbying and governance, and teeing up an early electoral reckoning. The tone will stay loud—free press vs. “deep state,” incumbents vs. returnees—but beneath the noise, the core question is whether Israel can institutionalize a security-first doctrine without defaulting to culture war. Done right, these reforms stiffen the home front for a protracted regional standoff; done sloppily, they hand adversaries propaganda while leaving the roof beams exposed.

Israel and the World

Macron’s “Two-State” Encore, Abbas’s Rebrand, and Europe’s Blind Spot

French President Emmanuel Macron hosted Mahmoud Abbas in Paris, announcing a joint committee to help the Palestinian Authority draft a constitution and “build the institutions of a future Palestinian state.” He called Abbas “my dear friend” and “a partner for peace,” pledged €100 million for Gaza “reconstruction,” and added France to a monitoring panel meant to end the PA’s pay-for-slay subsidies. Abbas, in turn, thanked France for recognizing “the State of Palestine,” promised elections “within a year of war’s end,” and insisted on a “demilitarized, democratic” state that still claims Gaza. The French press dutifully amplified the optics; French polling quietly showed that nearly three-quarters of citizens oppose unilateral recognition. For Europe, this is déjà vu—legal fiction sold as progress while Israel keeps paying the strategic bill.

ASSESSMENT

Paris is staging diplomacy for domestic theater. Macron knows Abbas can neither govern Gaza nor win a free and fair electoral vote in Ramallah, but “process” gives Europe relevance. Israel should treat the committee not as a threat but as a warning: the West still wants a peace it can fund, not one it can enforce. Expect more photo-ops, token audits of PA corruption, and renewed pressure on Jerusalem to “coordinate” with an authority that can’t even police a traffic stop in Jenin.

From Oxford to Vienna, the Moral Order Collapses in Public

Across the West, polite antisemitism continues to be amplified in tailored language and academic robes. In Britain, the Oxford Union will debate whether Israel is a “greater threat than Iran,” inviting former PA premier Mohammad Shtayyeh—now an open cheerleader for Tehran—alongside anti-Israel fixtures like Norman Finkelstein and Assad-aligned journalists. In London, rap duo Bob Vylan, fresh from chanting “Death to the IDF” at Glastonbury, will headline a Kentish Town gig under posters declaring a “Zionist-free zone,”

while local officials plead powerlessness. On the continent, Austria's far-right parliament speaker honored a Nazi-era vice chancellor, sparking Jewish student protests outside Vienna's parliament on the anniversary week of Kristallnacht. Each event exposes the same rot: Europe's institutions can police pronouns but not pogrom tropes.

ASSESSMENT

What begins as moral confusion ends as complicity. Western elites have turned anti-Israel activism into social currency—fashionable, fundable, and consequence-free. Israel's answer should not be apology but exposure: confront universities, sponsors, and cultural bodies with the evidence of hate they platform, and back Jewish students and artists who refuse to be cowed. The defense of Israel abroad has become the defense of decency itself. Silence is surrender; sunlight is strategy.

North American Crack-Up: Canada's Cowardice, U.S. Identity Games

In Canada, New Democratic Party frontrunner Heather McPherson sided with protesters who stormed a Toronto lecture by IDF veterans, calling for "war-crimes investigations" against the soldiers rather than the mob that smashed glass and assaulted police. Jewish groups denounced the statement as proof that antisemitism now wears the costume of "human rights." In the United States, Michigan Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed dodged the question of Israel's right to exist, pivoting to whether "Palestine has one," while branding AIPAC donors "MAGA billionaires." This is what progressive politics now markets as moral nuance: erase the Jewish state to prove you're fair-minded.

ASSESSMENT

Israel's allies are discovering the cost of cultural cowardice. When democratic parties excuse violence against Jewish speakers and redefine existence as "occupation," the rot has crossed from rhetoric to governance. Jerusalem should deepen security and trade ties with states that still honor reality—India, Greece, the Balkans—and stop mistaking Western sympathy for Western spine. The friendship that matters is the one that fights for truth, not likes.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- An ISIS-sympathizing Arizona man who planted fake bombs in churches across three states was sentenced to six years in prison for plotting to attack Christians. His online searches for "infidels dying" and ISIS videos made clear the target: American faith itself.
- A U.S. appeals court ruled that families of victims from the 2019 Pensacola naval base jihadist shooting can sue Saudi Arabia for gross negligence in sending the terrorist pilot trainee to America. Riyadh's "ally" status just met the limits of moral immunity.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- Iran's state broadcaster debuted Hebrew-subtitled propaganda called *Toward the Horizon of Palestine* to reach Israelis directly, boasting of its "resistance axis." Tehran's message is unchanged—it just switched languages.
- Hundreds of thousands of Haredim jammed Jerusalem over the draft law, paralyzing the city and shaking the coalition. It's not strategy—it's a last, loud bet by a movement out of political credit.

Domestic & Law

- Otzma Yehudit MK Almog Cohen stormed a Ben-Gurion University lecture after the instructor branded IDF soldiers "neo-Nazis." The university condemned the intrusion but admits the lecturer's bile "does not represent" it—then let him keep his job.
- A Dutch Jewish writer said a hospital nurse wearing a Palestinian "resistance fist" pin refused to treat her, walking out mid-exam. Europe's moral sickness has reached the emergency room.

Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- Israel began pumping desalinated seawater into the Sea of Galilee—the first project of its kind worldwide—to offset drought and keep the lake alive. Even creation, it seems, now runs on Israeli engineering.

Culture, Religion & Society

- Texas-born crooner Joe Buchanan brought his Jewish-country fusion to Israel, singing Torah in a cowboy hat and proving twang and Torah can share a stage.
- President Isaac Herzog marked fifty years since his father tore up the UN's "Zionism = Racism" decree, warning that the lie still echoes through modern politics.
- Florida deputies shot dead a man who threatened a Tallahassee synagogue days after police labeled the bomb scare "non-credible." The Jewish community now wonders what "credible" even means.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **U.S. Clock on Beirut Ticking** – A one-month window (practically to year-end) is circulating: disarm Hezbollah or face sharper Israeli targeting; partial U.S. embassy drawdown underway as Israel readies "particularly painful" precision cycles. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Syrian Gateways Loosened** – Israeli sources say Damascus reduced supervision on Lebanon crossings, easing Hezbollah restocks from Syria;

watch for more interdictions and deeper Israeli reach north of the border.
LIKELY TO ESCALATE

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Rafah Deportee Plan Stalls** – No third country will take the ~200 tunnel fighters; the package remains on paper while Hamas tests the Yellow Line and Israel keeps strikes surgical where “reconstruction” doubles as rear-mament. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Released Killers Marooned in Egypt** – Hundreds of Gazan and PA murderers freed in deals and deported abroad remain stuck in Egypt after Arab states refuse entry; risk of illicit return routes and criminal-terror pipelines reopening.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Houthis Signal ‘Pause,’ Not Peace** – Sana’a tells Hamas it halted launches while Gaza is quiet, shifts to internal purges and propaganda, but keeps training tempo high; the trigger to resume is explicit and short-fused. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Judea & Samaria

- **Shepherds Attacked Near Ma’ale Hever** – Dozens of Palestinian terrorists assaulted two Israeli shepherds near Natan Farm; both injured as IDF units move to secure the area and hunt the cell. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **State Employee Lauded a Murderer** – Authorities opened an inquiry into a National Parks worker who publicly praised a freed Hamas killer; expect suspensions and disciplinary steps as ministries scrub personnel for open support of terror.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **France Builds PA ‘State’ Committee** – Macron and Abbas launch a Paris panel to draft a PA constitution and “day-after” scaffolding, plus €100m for Gaza; political theater continues even as governance and enforcement remain absent on the ground.
- **U.S. Base Near Gaza Floated** – Preliminary Israeli reporting points to an American base in the Gaza envelope (~\$500m) to host international elements; location, mandate, and force composition remain unresolved—watch for Israeli sovereignty red lines.

Homefront & Politics

- **Death Penalty Bill Clears First Gate** – Knesset advanced capital punishment for terrorist murderers 39–16 amid floor chaos; public support is broad and cross-bloc, so expect fast committee work and intense court challenges.
- **Sde Teiman Oversight Compromise** – High Court pressed AG and Justice Minister to agree by day’s end on a truly external overseer for the leak

probe, signaling neither side's nominee will stand; a neutral jurist would steady the legal corps.

- **Air Travel Tax Incoming** – A new flight levy (weight × distance) targets ~\$1b/yr for the treasury; airlines will pass costs to passengers, nudging fares up as security-driven logistics demands stay high.
- **Coal-Exit Timeline Revived** – The grid aims to end coal by end-2026 pending unit conversions and new capacity; procurement and commissioning slippage risks price spikes and vulnerability during northern contingencies.

Gaza is splitting by behavior, not borders: Israeli-policed enclaves versus Hamas-run squalor. The north remains coercive counter-rearmament; every “residential” cache turned crater is another public notice to Beirut. At home, the justice system either names a truly external Sde Teiman umpire or forfeits trust it cannot regain in wartime. Expect more Yellow Line contact kills, deeper Nabatieh/Tyre strikes, and a domestic glidepath that swaps theater for enforcement. The verdict: no parole for tunnel men, no house-to-house alibis, no second UNRWA.

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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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