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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

Friday, November 21

Diplomacy Pretends the War Paused; Gaza's Tunnels and Lebanon's Skies Say Otherwise

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE This is what “soft power” against Jews looks like in 2025: CAIR paying the legal bills of disciplined campus shock troops, Hamas running financial and family pipelines into Canada, graduate unions blessing “armed resistance,” a mayor-elect parsing aliyah as a crime, and a bounty board putting prices on the heads of physicists and university presidents. None of this happens in a vacuum — it’s the same ideological current that cheered October 7 and now wants to export intifada logic into North American streets and lecture halls. Jews have armored doors and guards because they know this script. We need to fully understand we are not dealing with protest culture, but with the advancing stages of an increasing security problem. The West is a place where Hamas has soft rear bases and Jews have to live as if every public outing might be on somebody’s kill list.

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Israel Brief: Friday, November 21

Diplomacy Pretends the War Paused; Gaza's Tunnels and Lebanon's Skies Say Otherwise

Flash Brief: The Day in 90 Seconds or Less

- **Gaza:** IDF maps Beit Hanoun's full tunnel city, kills Hamas naval chief and Rafah tunnel engineer; terrorists keep surfacing east of Yellow Line.
- **Lebanon/Syria:** Israel hits Hezbollah rebuild nodes as Beirut talks "negotiations"; Golan tour signals no Israeli pullback from Syrian buffer.
- **Judea & Samaria:** IDF/Shin Bet arrest over 60 suspects, shut weapons workshops and terror-financed vehicle network tied to recent attacks.
- **October 7 Inquiry:** Cabinet advances government-run probe as High Court freezes Levin's Sde Teiman overseer again, deepening the judiciary-government knife fight.
- **Draft & Politics:** Netanyahu vows to enlist 17,000 Haredim in three years as polls show Likud rising and "no service, no ballot" sentiment hardens.
- **Iran/Axis:** Tehran cancels IAEA cooperation, boosts IRGC presence in Yemen, and quietly asks Riyadh to mediate with Washington.
- **Lawfare & Info-War:** New data punctures Gaza famine claims used in Hague cases while US Treasury sanctions more of Iran's oil shadow fleet.

The War Today

HAMAS REGROUPS BENEATH GAZA WHILE ISRAEL HUNTS THE SURVIVORS

Israel is now fighting three layers of the same war in Gaza. In the north, the IDF exposed the full Beit Hanoun structure: thousands of buildings rigged for fire, a school turned into a firing post, and a tunnel system laced under civilian homes — a methodical military city that Hamas built and then lost. In the south, Rafah shows what comes after: terrorists emerging in batches from tunnels east of the Yellow Line as pressure underground forces them to flee. Fifteen surfaced in one morning; six died by airstrike, five surrendered, and the rest are being hunted across sand, shafts, and alleys. At the command level, the IDF eliminated Abdallah Abu Shamala, Hamas's naval chief who helped plan both Zikim and October 7, and Fadi Abu Mustafa, the tunnel architect who helped hold Israeli hostages. Meanwhile, Hamas continues its dual-track strategy described by former Shin Bet officer Shalom Arbel: publicly claiming it "cannot find" the remaining hostage bodies while using the delay to stretch time and rebuild its capacity.

ASSESSMENT

Repeated Yellow Line infiltrations, armed cells emerging inside IDF-held terrain, and a tunnel network so vast that one of its branches — the 7-kilometer “White-Crowned” route — held Lt. Hadar Goldin beneath UNRWA offices, schools, and mosques. The IDF is dismantling the grid faster than Hamas can hide it, but Hamas is fighting for strategic survival. The battlefield truth is simple: Hamas is still a coherent military organism in the west, but east of the Yellow Line it is dying in spasms. Israel’s job is to finish, not manage, this — because a movement that sees its ~60,000 dead and calls it “victory” simply because international perception of Israel has declined will always view a ceasefire as the first chapter of the next war.

LEBANON FLOATS NEGOTIATIONS AS ISRAEL PREPARES THE REAL ONES

Lebanon is speaking one language though it acts in another. Prime Minister Nawaf Salam says Beirut is “ready to negotiate” with Israel and wants US mediation to restart border talks, citing the 2022 maritime deal as proof that diplomacy works. But Hezbollah’s position is unchanged: it keeps rebuilding its forward infrastructure, condemns the Lebanese government’s demilitarization plan as a “grave sin,” and vows to retain its arsenal permanently. While Salam claims the LAF is expanding control and sealing smuggling corridors, Hezbollah is openly preparing for the next round — and Israeli airstrikes on rebuilt nodes from Bint Jbeil to Deir Kifa reflect that reality. The arrest of drug-lord Nouh Zaiter, long tied to Captagon trafficking that funds Hezbollah’s operations, shows Beirut can move when it wants to, but the timing suggests politics, not resolve. Meanwhile on the Syrian line, Netanyahu’s armored tour through the Golan buffer — flanked by Katz, Sa’ar, Zamir, and Zini — signaled something sharper: Israel is not withdrawing from its outposts, not giving up Hermon, and not trusting al-Sharaa’s promises as long as Iran’s corridor runs through Damascus.

ASSESSMENT

Lebanon’s “readiness to negotiate” is leverage, not conversion. Hezbollah retains actual coercive power, and its rearmament under civilian cover is what drives Israeli targeting, not French communiqués. Syria remains an Iranian runway, and Beirut’s diplomatic overtures cannot cover the fact that Hezbollah decides whether Lebanon lives in peace or war. Israel is positioning for a short, heavy campaign if forced — and the political choreography on the Golan shows Jerusalem expects to be forced.

IRAN’S WEST BANK ENGINE REVS AS ISRAEL STRIKES FIRST

While Gaza dominates headlines, Iran’s other project — Judea and Samaria — is accelerating. IDF and Shin Bet forces arrested over 60 suspects across the territory this week, including 18 Hamas operatives, multiple weapons traffickers, and the networks tied to recent attacks. Raids shut down weapons workshops from Etzion to Binyamin to Menashe, seized rifles, pistols, IEDs, and captured vehicles bought with terror funds. These operations are a pre-emptive campaign against Iranian-fed infrastructure drifting south from Jenin and Nablus toward the Hebron belt. In Gaza itself, a parallel trend is emerging: dozens of armed groups — clan factions, criminal militias, self-styled “Popular Forces” — now operate in Israeli-held zones, some coordinating

with IDF units and some positioning themselves as future contenders. Netanyahu openly acknowledges Israeli support for certain factions to secure the belt, even as analysts warn that arming micro-groups in a collapsing society carries the same risks the US learned in Afghanistan. Residents in Gaza complain of unaccountable militias; others beg Israel for protection from Hamas.

ASSESSMENT

It's one ecosystem across the board: Iranian-backed terror in Judea and Samaria, Hamas cadres regrouping in Gaza, and a fracturing local order that could cut both ways. Judea and Samaria is no longer a secondary front; it is Iran's chosen successor theater, and the IDF's raids are what keep it from becoming Gaza 2.0. In Gaza, Israel's use of local allies buys short-term security and human intelligence, but it also seeds factions that could turn hostile once Hamas weakens. The only stable path is overwhelming Israeli control, relentless rollup operations in Judea and Samaria, and a clear understanding that Iran's goal is simple: make every hilltop and every alley part of the same front. Israel has no choice but to stay ahead of that timeline.

Inside Israel

GOVERNMENT INQUIRY ADVANCES AS JUDICIARY TRIES TO KEEP THE WHEEL

Netanyahu's cabinet has authorized an independent October 7 inquiry that will finally examine the full chain of failure — political, military, legal, and prosecutorial. The opposition is calling it “whitewash,” but the real panic is coming from the system that would lose control: the Attorney General's office, the senior prosecutors, and the judges who shaped the pre-war rules of engagement and repeatedly blocked the tools the IDF and Shin Bet said they needed. Their alarm is obvious. Lahav 433's commander — one of the country's most powerful investigators — is himself under criminal probe for interference; the Sde Teiman leak case shows a prosecutor authorized a politically explosive leak and then investigated her own conduct; and the High Court has now frozen Yariv Levin's choice of overseer twice, issuing midnight orders to keep the investigation inside the same walls that failed to police their own. For two years, calls for a state commission were really calls to keep control of the narrative in judicial hands. The government's inquiry breaks that monopoly — which is precisely why the system is treating it like an existential threat.

ASSESSMENT

Israel cannot ask its soldiers, commanders, and reservists to risk everything — then hand the defining inquiry of the worst security collapse in state history to the same machinery that tied their hands before October 7 and shielded its own after. An inquiry with political authorization and public visibility is not a weakness; it is the first real chance to expose how both the government and judicial establishment shaped the pre-war rules and evaded scrutiny after the massacre. The High Court is resisting because it knows this time the flashlight is pointed at them, too.

ISRAELIS REJECT NGO MYTHMAKING AND DEMAND A GOVERNMENT THAT FIGHTS THE REAL WAR

New polling shows the opposition bloc hovering at 61 seats, but the real movement is inside the center: Israelis are aligning around a harder security doctrine, a real draft law, and a government that doesn't treat Judea and Samaria like a PR liability. The public's views are blunt—67% reject a Palestinian state, half would rather go to elections than pass another lenient Haredi draft bill, and a wide majority refuse to trade Israel's aerial edge for Saudi optics. Inside the coalition, the security establishment is shifting as well: the Shin Bet chief now backs the death penalty for terrorists, the IDF supports it if applied case-by-case, and ministers like Ben-Gvir and Smotrich are pushing to finally level the deterrence equation after 30 years of asymmetry. At the same time, the political class is still obsessing over “settler violence” while the data — and the ground — show what it always was: a fringe criminal problem inflated into a narrative weapon. The IDF's own Central Command told the cabinet that conventional “education plans” won't fix the handful of hilltop offenders, and Katz correctly warned that reinstating administrative detention for Jews would only generate more distrust and more grievance. Criminality must be dealt within the criminal justice system. Meanwhile, the real enemy — Hamas, PIJ, and Iran's militias — are running a full-spectrum terror campaign in Judea and Samaria, while NGOs and foreign governments deliberately pretend the ridge is the problem, not the people who want to burn it down.

ASSESSMENT

Israelis are choosing clarity over choreography. They want deterrence restored, the draft crisis solved through actual equality of burden, and a government honest enough to call a microscopic fringe a policing issue — not a national indictment. Ben-Gvir and Smotrich understand this terrain because they live its reality: thousands of Palestinian attacks a year, Iranian money fueling militants from Jenin to Hebron, and a global narrative machine desperate to blame the Jews on the ridge for the war being waged against them. The country is drifting away from euphemisms and back toward doctrine — enforce the law, kill the terrorists, and stop letting fabricated NGO language set the agenda.

Israel and the World

LAWFARE, LEAKS, AND A GAZA FAMINE THAT NEVER HIT THE THRESHOLD

US policy around Gaza is now being hit from both sides: from inside the Trump camp, and from the data. Jonathan Pollard torched the White House peace team on air, accusing Jared Kushner and envoy Steve Witkoff of fronting for Saudi and Qatari interests, “carrying on with terrorists,” and using the 20-point Gaza plan to block an Israeli victory rather than secure hostages. He framed the October 9 ceasefire-hostage deal as justifiable only if Israel had “unleashed hell on Hamas” once the last living captives came home, and warned that the plan's statehood language “undermines our independence.” At the same time, new numbers from the Global Nutrition Cluster's Palestine unit and Hamas's own mortality stats undercut the UN-backed IPC famine declaration. Inflated IPC figures fed straight into ICJ and ICC filings accusing

Israel of deliberate starvation and “extermination,” and were happily amplified by the same UN system now obsessed with Trump’s Gaza blueprint.

ASSESSMENT

Parts of the US administration are trying to manage Israel into a cramped ceasefire with a “pathway” glued on, while the international bureaucracy cooked their own numbers to brand Israel a genocidal starver. Israel’s task is to treat the Gaza plan, like UNSC 2803, as a toolbox — and to drag every famine allegation back to hard numbers before they calcify into “war crimes” in the Hague.

WESTERN SYSTEMS GO SOFT ON JIHAD AND HARD ON JEWS

The same West that lectures Israel on “proportionality” is quietly building a permissive ecosystem for people who want Jews dead or gone. In California, the state’s biggest CAIR chapter raised over \$64,000 and handed out at least \$20,000 in “loans and scholarships” — \$1,000 a head — to anti-Israel students disciplined by their universities, explicitly rewarding campus activists whose encampments and harassment campaigns crossed red lines. In Canada, intelligence sources say roughly 450 individuals with roles in Hamas have links to the country — citizens, residents, or operatives with family and financial ties — including an alleged Hamas financier who used three Canadian passports to run a \$500 million terror investment office, and a former Canadian reservist who yelled “Free Palestine” while charging Israelis with a knife at the Gaza border. On US campuses, Cornell’s graduate student union is pushing a BDS referendum that glorifies “armed resistance ... by any means necessary,” treats recent terror as heroic working-class struggle, and openly describes “Zionist interests” as the enemy of labor — classic conspiracy language with a grad-school gloss.

Outside New York’s Park East Synagogue, a protest targeting a Nefesh B’Nefesh aliyah event went fully mask-off: chants of “globalize the intifada,” “take another settler out,” “death to the IDF,” plus direct slurs at Jews walking into shul. Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani suddenly discovered nuance: through a spokesperson he said he “discouraged the language,” insisted sacred spaces shouldn’t host activity “in violation of international law,” and never mentioned antisemitism or Jews at all — effectively blaming the victims of a hate crime for using a synagogue to promote aliyah (newsflash: Judaism is about Zion). While all that is percolating, an anonymous site — likely Iran-linked — has posted detailed kill-bounties on Israeli academics and scientists, with photos, home addresses, ID numbers, and payout tables: \$50,000 to murder any one of hundreds of named targets, \$100,000 for killing protest leader Shikma Bressler, smaller sums for arson and harassment. Shin Bet, Mossad, and the cyber directorate are all on it, but the key point is simple: someone just crowdsourced a global hit list for Israeli civilians.

ASSESSMENT

This is what “soft power” against Jews looks like in 2025: CAIR paying the legal bills of disciplined campus shock troops, Hamas running financial and family pipelines into Canada, graduate unions blessing “armed resistance,” a mayor-elect parsing aliyah as a crime, and a bounty board putting prices on the heads of physicists and university presidents. None of this happens in a vacuum — it’s the same ideological current that cheered October 7 and now wants to export intifada logic into North American streets and lecture halls. Jews have armored doors and guards because they know this script. We need to fully understand we are not dealing with protest culture, but with the advancing stages of an increasing security problem. The West is a place where Hamas has soft rear bases and Jews have to live as if every public outing might be on somebody’s kill list.

Briefly Noted**FRONTLINE & SECURITY**

- **Iron Dome Expansion:** Israel signed a major deal with Rafael to massively expand Iron Dome interceptor production, using \$5.2 billion from the latest US aid package. This locks in years of high-tempo air defense capacity for the IDF and deepens the US–Israel weapons pipeline.
- **Drone Threat Response:** The IDF General Staff convened with Shin Bet and police to address the growing drone and glider threat after a major drill showed forces struggled to counter UAV attacks in Judea, Samaria and the Jordan Valley. Commanders admit the current toolbox is inadequate.
- **Terror Financing:** A City Journal investigation found that massive welfare and autism-care fraud in Minnesota’s Somali community sent millions through hawala networks that law-enforcement sources say helped fund al-Shabaab.

DIPLOMACY & GEOPOLITICS

- **Iran Nuclear Overture:** Iran’s president quietly asked Mohammed bin Salman to help reopen nuclear talks with Washington, signaling Tehran’s fear of another Israeli strike cycle and its own economic collapse.
- **Oil Sanctions:** The US Treasury sanctioned a fresh network of front companies, tankers and a Mahan Air subsidiary that bankroll Iran’s armed forces via covert oil exports and weapons flights to Hezbollah and Syria.
- **Palestinian Authority Support:** The EU hosted 60 delegations in Brussels and pledged another €80+ million toward a three-year €1.6 billion package to “reform” and prop up the PA.

DOMESTIC & LAW

- **Texas Investigation:** Texas Gov. Greg Abbott asked state law enforcement to investigate CAIR, the Muslim Brotherhood and “sharia tribunals” that present themselves as courts with binding authority over Muslims.

ECONOMY, TECH & INFRASTRUCTURE

- **India Trade:** Israel and India formally restarted free-trade talks during Economy Minister Piyush Goyal’s visit with a 100-strong business delegation, aiming to slash tariffs and open service and digital trade channels.

CULTURE, RELIGION & SOCIETY

- **Arab-Israeli Advocacy:** Arab-Israeli activist Yoseph Haddad is leading a 14-member delegation of Arab Christians, Muslims and Druze across US campuses and Congress to demolish the “apartheid” lie.
- **AI Against Antisemitism:** ADL-affiliated researchers built “DebunkBot,” an AI chatbot trained to argue against antisemitic conspiracy theories, finding users who engaged with it believed those lies less.
- **Grotesque Protest:** Activists staged a horrendously grotesque “Israel’s Friends-giving” performance at Washington’s Union Station, depicting Trump, Netanyahu and others drinking “Gaza’s spilled blood” — straight out of medieval blood libel art.

Developments to Watch

JUDEA & SAMARIA

West Bank Raids Stay in High Gear – IDF and Shin Bet arrested another three terrorists in Judea and Samaria who were planning attacks and seized a significant weapons cache. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

NORTHERN FRONT (LEBANON / SYRIA)

Lebanon Strikes Shift to Wave Pattern – Israeli strikes in Lebanon are moving from isolated hits to sustained waves against Hezbollah infrastructure as the December “understandings” deadline approaches. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

UN Tells Beirut: Stop Pretending – The UN’s Lebanon coordinator warned Beirut it can’t keep stalling on disarming non-state actors while PM Nawaf Salam claims his demilitarization plan is “on track” as Hezbollah calls it a “grave sin.” **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

GAZA & SOUTHERN THEATER

Rafah Tunnels Bleed Fighters Eastward – Around 15 Hamas terrorists surfaced from tunnels east of the Yellow Line near Rafah; six were killed from the air, five surrendered, and the rest are being hunted while more infiltrators are caught and killed along the belt. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

REGIONAL AXIS (IRAN, HOUTHIS, MILITIAS)

Tehran Walks Out on the IAEA – Iran’s foreign minister canceled cooperation agreements with the IAEA while IRGC spokesmen say they are on heightened readiness and expect war “at any moment.” **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

IRGC Floods Yemen and the Red Sea Rim – Iran has ramped up deployment of senior IRGC officers into Yemen over the last two weeks, with Eritrea now pulled into the orbit as a logistics node. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

HOME FRONT & POLITICS

Draft Law Promises Meet Demographic Math – Netanyahu is now on record promising a conscription law that will enlist 17,000 Haredim in three years, while fresh polling shows Likud rising.

Sde Teiman Oversight War Goes Nuclear – High Court President Yitzhak Amit froze Yariv Levin's appointment of Judge Ben Hamo as Sde Teiman leak overseer with a late-night injunction, effectively suspending a supervisory role the Court itself authorized days ago.

The next inflection points are already visible. In Gaza, the question isn't whether Hamas is "weaker." It's whether Israel allows itself to seek victory. In Lebanon, the choice is between a short, hard air campaign that actually rips out Hezbollah's production and forward network, or yet another round of speeches about 1701 while the rockets slide back under living rooms. In Judea and Samaria, the only thing standing between the current drip of attacks and a full Iranian-managed front is the nightly actions by the security services.

Inside Israel, either the country writes a real draft law that treats service as the price of citizenship, or the IDF's manpower cliff becomes the limiting factor in every future operation. Either the October 7 inquiry cuts into the judicial and legal establishment as deeply as it cuts into the cabinet and the brass, or half the country will treat any "lessons learned" as spin.

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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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