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READER EDITION

December 1, 2025

ISRAEL BRIEF

Monday, December 1

Israel finishing the tunnel fugitives as it quietly reloads for a northern showdown.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE Trump is not running a pro-Israel foreign policy. He's running a transactional oil-and-photo-op policy in which Israel is useful so long as it doesn't collide with Gulf ego and American corporate contracts. The sober read is simple: Jerusalem cannot outsource its red lines to *any* administration, especially one that sees MBS, Erdogan and the Qataris as preferred regional fixers. Israel should bank what it can from Washington, but plan its Iran-Hezbollah campaign on the assumption that the same White House that gold-plates MBS's visit will flinch the moment Israel's war collides with someone's energy IPO.

CLASSIFICATION

Reader Edition

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GAZA's underground is cracking for real now: senior Hamas commanders are dying in collapsed shafts while the UN asks Pakistan to police Hamas without touching its guns. In the north, Syria has joined the board as an open Iranian corridor, Hezbollah is frozen between pride and survival, and everyone is counting the days to the post-Pope ultimatum window. In Judea and Samaria weapons traffickers and full terror belts are being rolled up before they mature. Inside Israel, Netanyahu's pardon bid has dragged the legal guild into its first real stress test in decades, just as the Haredi draft fight and crime crackdowns expose who actually intends to govern. Here's the day in one glance before we drill down.

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Flash Brief

- **Rafah:** IDF killed East Rafah battalion commander, his deputy and Ghazi Hamad's son fleeing a tunnel. *See The War Today.*
- **Gaza plan:** UNSC 2803 backs a Board of Peace and ISF while everyone but Israel refuses to disarm Hamas. *See The War Today & Israel and the World.*
- **Syria/Lebanon:** After the Beit Jinn raid, Israel warns al-Sharaa through Washington it will escalate inside Syria if staging continues. *See The War Today & Developments to Watch.*
- **Judea & Samaria:** Yamam busted a five-man cell near Barta'a and nabbed top Tulkarm gun-runner Ahmad Nasrallah. *See The War Today & Developments to Watch.*
- **Tech front:** Defense chiefs unveil breakthroughs in drone detection, swarm interception and battlefield robotics; Iron Beam slated for deployment. *See The War Today & Briefly Noted.*
- **Legal war:** Netanyahu's mid-trial pardon request hits Herzog; High Court shields Baharav-Miara while AG calls reform "unconstitutional." *See Inside Israel.*
- **Diplomacy:** Iran and Turkey launch a new Silk Road rail corridor as Trump and MBS upgrade Riyadh and sideline normalization. *See Israel and the World.*

The pattern is getting sharper. On one track, you have UN resolutions, ISF talk, papal soundbites and Gulf handshakes that all assume Israel will live beside armed terror franchises forever—just with better branding and more blue helmets. On the other, you have facts: dead battalion commanders in Rafah tunnels, Yamam teams pulling cells out of Barta'a safehouses, and IDF battalions fighting jihadis eight kilometers inside Syria while Katz and Milo quietly define a permanent security zone on the eastern Golan. Inside, the same collision holds: a legal caste that treated itself as untouchable for three decades now finds its Bus-300 tricks, MAG leaks, and self-policing habits under a hot lamp, just as a real draft law and a real anti-crime campaign start to move.

The War Today

Gaza: UN Plans, Israeli Facts, and the Collapse of Hamas's Last Pocket

THE UN's new Resolution 2803 tries to package Gaza into a "Comprehensive Plan" with a Board of Peace, an International Stabilization Force, and a conditional future technocratic Palestinian administration. On paper, it's sweeping: multilayered benchmarks, reform requirements, and a demilitarization standard that places Israel at the center of any withdrawal timeline. In practice, the plan already collides with the only thing that matters — events on the ground. In Rafah, the IDF eliminated the Hamas East Rafah battalion commander, his deputy, a company commander, and the son of senior Hamas official Ghazi Hamad as they fled a collapsing tunnel shaft. Over forty terrorists have been killed over the past week; dozens more lie buried

or starving underground. Hamas refuses to return the final hostage bodies and is visibly disintegrating east of the Yellow Line. Smotrich has frozen all reconstruction funding, insisting Israeli taxpayers will not underwrite Gaza's rebuild while terrorists still emerge armed from the rubble, and senior officers confirm that engineering teams can't safely enter until the remaining militants are neutralized. Pakistan has now said it will join an ISF force only if it *doesn't* have to disarm Hamas — a neat encapsulation of why this “transition architecture” looks more like choreography than governance.

ASSESSMENT

Israel's position is unambiguous: no reconstruction, no transition, no diplomatic theater until Gaza is physically and politically incapable of attacking Israelis. The tunnel collapses are writing the doctrine: victory first, paperwork later.

Northern Front: Syria Opens the Gate While Hezbollah Freezes in Place

MAJ. Gen. Rafi Milo put it bluntly: “We cannot wait for the enemy to attack.” Last week's deep Beit Jinn raid proved him right as reservists from the 55th Brigade fought a multi-faction jihadi ambush eight kilometers inside Syria, leaving seven Israelis wounded and confirming a new Iranian-backed architecture on the eastern Golan flank. Israeli intelligence now links Beit Jinn networks not just to Sunni jihadists but to Sharaa's General Intelligence Directorate, which has been targeting Druze civilians while providing cover to Hamas, PIJ, and Houthi operatives moving along the Damascus belt. Israel has sent messages through multiple capitals warning Syria to shut down cross-border staging or face direct action. Katz has backed that up with public statements that Israel will not cede the buffer zone and is preparing a response package if Syrian provocations continue. Lebanese PM Salam openly admits Israel's escalations will continue, and American envoys are expected to arrive in Beirut with a take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum: disarm Hezbollah or Israel resumes large-scale strikes. Hezbollah, still humiliated after Tabataba'i's elimination, vows revenge but has not acted — and every day of silence cracks its deterrence myth a little further.

ASSESSMENT

The northern front is coalescing into a two-axis problem: Hezbollah on the west, Syrian-Iranian networks on the east. Hezbollah's indecision isn't strategy — it's paralysis under pressure and a December deadline. Syria's escalation signals Iran's intent to open a new pincer from the Golan. The Hermon and Golan sectors are active, requiring preemption, not containment.

Judea & Samaria: The Ridge Becomes the Firewall

YAMAM, ISA, and IDF units captured a five-man cell preparing an imminent attack in the Barta'a sector. Hours later, troops in Irtah arrested Ahmad Nasrallah, a major weapons trafficker supplying Tulkarm's networks. These actions overlap with the larger encirclement of the Tubas–Tammun belt, where over 220 targets have been hit in the past week and dozens of terrorists killed or detained. The government will not tolerate PA-aligned networks building Iran's next battalion corridor on the ridge.

ASSESSMENT

Judea and Samaria is the quiet center of Iran's long game, and Israel is finally disrupting it comprehensively — politically, financially, and operationally. Taking down weapons traffickers while encircling entire belts of terror infrastructure signals a shift from reactive raids to proactive engagement. The ridge is becoming what it should have always been: the firewall between Iran's proxies and Israel's heartland.

The New Battlefield: Drones, Lasers, and the First Robotics War

ISRAEL'S defense establishment is treating drone warfare and robotics as strategic pillars, not futuristic supplements. Brig. Gen. Benny Aminov announced a breakthrough in enemy drone detection and swarm interception — with directed-energy weapons about to become operational doctrine. The DefenseTech Summit showcased a suite of drone-based and AI-linked systems designed for rapid, autonomous threat identification. Meanwhile, Col. (Ret.) Yaron Sarig spelled out the obvious: the 2023–2025 conflict is the world's first true robotics war. Tens of thousands of autonomous systems — ground robots, tunnel crawlers, remote ambush vehicles, AI-driven detection platforms — executed kilometers of Gaza maneuvers and mapped hostile positions before infantry entered. The IDF sees this not as a novelty but a structural shift toward battles where machine-first contact becomes standard and AI augments every sensor, shooter, and soldier.

ASSESSMENT

We are watching the transition from human-led engagements to AI-guided battles. Directed-energy interceptors, swarm detection nets, and autonomous ground systems reduce the tactical burden on soldiers and expand operational reach. In the coming northern round, this ecosystem becomes decisive: Hezbollah's drone arsenal, Iran's cruise systems, and Syria's cheap swarms rely on overwhelming volume. Israel is building counters that scale faster and cost less.

Inside Israel

The Legal Guild Faces Its First Real Test Since Oslo

THE legal establishment is in full defensive crouch after Netanyahu detonated decades of judicial choreography with a mid-trial pardon request that admits nothing, concedes nothing, and offers no surrender. Gali Baharav-Miara called the Judicial Selection Committee reform “unconstitutional” — a term Israel doesn’t even have — while the High Court convened a rare 7-justice panel to protect its own patronage network by freezing her dismissal. Herzog, reading the room, now promises to decide the pardon “only for the good of Israel,” a formulation that tells the system he won’t take dictation from the same clerical class that has spent years trying to engineer Netanyahu’s removal by process instead of ballots. Bennett — ever the weather vane of elite panic — suddenly wants a “dignified withdrawal from political life,” which is the opposition’s way of begging for an outcome they couldn’t win at the polls. The justice system is fractured: the MAG leak scandal, internal cover-ups, and procedural taint around Baharav-Miara’s conduct have everyone in black robes wondering how much more the public will tolerate. Netanyahu sensed the opening. His message is simple: the guild can keep its empire if it stops trying to topple the elected government. Push further, and everything is up for review — selection committees, firing procedures, and the medieval privilege structure they’ve wrapped in moral language for 30 years.

ASSESSMENT

Netanyahu is using the guild’s moment of weakness to force a constitutional reset. Both sides of this drama abandoned optics, so now we’re stuck with messy action — sausage is best made behind closed doors. The legal class must now choose between ideological purity and institutional integrity.

Draft Reform Becomes the Next Frontline of Governance

BOAZ Bismuth finally put a tangible Haredi draft framework on the table — timelines, targets, and the first real enforcement structure in years — and instantly triggered the full spectrum of actors who prefer the stalemate: every faction that uses the draft as a political cudgel rather than a manpower solution. Likud MK Dan Illouz wants sharper sanctions; RZP’s Ofir Sofer threatens to vote down the bill entirely; Edelstein calls it “not enough”; while Lapid proposes stripping voting rights from draft-dodgers — but not Arabs, because “they aren’t summoned.” That slip was an admission that unfortunately some view this not as a push for equality but as punishment of Haredim. Meanwhile, extremists celebrated a Haredi draft dodger in Jerusalem by rioting and attacking police — a public reminder of how toxic decades of judicial micromanagement and political cowardice made this debate. Through it all, the core reality remains unchanged: the Court set a 45-day deadline, the army needs manpower, and the only people crafting actual law are Smotrich’s allies and Likud’s governance wing. Everyone else is grandstanding.

ASSESSMENT

For the first time in years, the government is attempting a real, legislated compromise instead of judicial decrees or political evasions. The bill will improve and tighten, but it's only a first step on the road to full fairness.

Crime Clans Finally Learn There's a Government Again

POLICE and Border Police arrested dozens of members of the Abu Latif and Hariri crime families after a year-long undercover operation that targeted extortion networks, public-tender blackmail, and “protection money” rackets from the Galilee to Judea and Samaria. These clans, long treated as untouchable by past governments, have operated as parallel sovereignties, siphoning municipal budgets, terrorizing contractors, and feeding weapons into terror pipelines. The operation spanned homes, businesses, and nodes across Judea and Samaria, backed by the State Attorney's economic division and the Northern Command. At the same time, Israel is dealing with spillover from border areas: weapons caches near Dimona, smuggling lines through Rahat, and clan militias destabilizing the Negev.

ASSESSMENT

A new model of rapid response, uniform law enforcement, zero exceptions — is finally collapsing the criminal economies that flourished under previous “don't inflame the sector” doctrines. The Negev, Galilee, and seam zones will shift from gray zones to governed spaces as this model continues.

Israel and the World

Silk Roads for Tehran, Dead Ends for Jerusalem

IRAN and Turkey just agreed on a \$1.6 billion “New Silk Road” rail link — 200 km of track that will turn Iran into a cheaper, faster land bridge between China and Europe, while Ankara and Tehran talk openly about stripping away “barriers to trade and investment.” Layer in Iranian air-defense drills, IRGC maritime games, and Syrian diplomats bragging at the UN that they're using international forums to isolate Israel while investors pour into a “liberated” Syria, and you get the picture: the axis builds corridors, the diplomats build structures, and in both cases the one constant is that Israel is expected to live next to an armed Hamas and an armed Hezbollah forever — while paying the security price for everyone else's trade routes.

ASSESSMENT

The “international architecture” now forming around Gaza and the region is not designed to defeat jihad. It’s designed to cage Israel while the money flows and groups rearm. Jihadis want another bite at the river-to-the-sea apple. Iran gets rail and air-defense, Turkey gets transit and leverage, Pakistan gets prestige without risk, and Hamas gets frozen in place under a blue-helmet umbrella. Israel’s job is to ignore the theater and keep its own red line intact: no sovereign terror entity on its borders, no matter how many corridors Beijing and Ankara want to run through them.

Trump, MBS, and the Price of Being Everyone’s “Strategic Partner”

MOHAMMED bin Salman just did a victory lap in Trump’s Oval Office — gold trim on the robe, gold trim on the room, and nearly a trillion dollars of Saudi investment dangled as the price of admission — and walked out with upgraded defense status, a nuclear cooperation framework, and a presidential promise to sell him F-35s. That makes Saudi Arabia the first Arab state queued up for the world’s top fighter, while Israel’s formal qualitative edge gets quietly converted into “don’t worry, they’re friends *right now*.” At the same time, Trump and MBS inked a Strategic AI partnership and a stack of mega-deals that make Riyadh a direct client in exactly the sectors where Israel used to be the indispensable partner. Normalization with Jerusalem is still verbally “on the table,” but now explicitly priced in Palestinian statehood language and wrapped in Saudi public opinion that Gaza has made even more hostile — and crucially, MBS no longer needs Israel to get into Trump’s office or into Silicon Valley’s chip racks. Trump also just rehabilitated Riyadh and Doha in parallel, rewarding both oil and cash, while Israel is cast as the hyper-active neighbor whose raids from Damascus to Doha complicate everyone else’s business model.

ASSESSMENT

Trump is not running a pro-Israel foreign policy. He’s running a transactional oil-and-photo-op policy in which Israel is useful so long as it doesn’t collide with Gulf ego and American corporate contracts. The sober read is simple: Jerusalem cannot outsource its red lines to any administration, especially one that sees MBS, Erdogan and the Qataris as preferred regional fixers. Israel should bank what it can from Washington, but plan its Iran-Hezbollah campaign on the assumption that the same White House that gold-plates MBS’s visit will flinch the moment Israel’s war collides with someone’s energy IPO.

The Vatican’s Moral Theater and Europe’s Second Nakba

POPE Leo flew from a photo-op with Erdogan in Ankara — praising Turkey as a model of “religious coexistence” — straight into Beirut to declare that a Palestinian state is “the only solution,” all while his convoy rolls through Hezbollah turf flanked by Imam Mehdi Scouts who glorify a terror army openly

committed to wiping out the Jewish state. He will pray at the port blast site, stage an interfaith show with Lebanon's elites, and call for "coexistence" in a country where Iran's militia holds the trigger on war and peace, and where the main debate is whether Hezbollah should ever be disarmed for real. On the same November 30 that Leo talks about "justice for everyone," Israel marks the Day of Departure and Expulsion of Jews from Arab countries and Iran — nearly a million Jews stripped of citizenship, property and history after 1948, from Baghdad and Tripoli to Cairo and Aden, producing a quiet, one-way ethnic cleansing the Vatican never made the centerpiece of its "Nakba" theology. Meanwhile in Europe, doxxed and harassed pro-Israel Jews from Brussels to London are packing up and making aliyah because it is literally safer to raise children under rocket fire in the Middle East rather than under street mobs, BBC propaganda and police that file Jew-hatred under "public order." Europe's first Nakba emptied its Jewish quarters; the second is emptying its public squares of any Jew who dares to wear a kippah.

The Pope's performance — blessing "peace" at a Hezbollah-contaminated shrine while framing Palestinian statehood as the only morally serious option — is soft cover for decades of Arab and Islamist violence that erased Jewish communities from Casablanca to Kirkuk and is now pushing their descendants out of Europe. Israel should treat Rome's line the same way it treats Qatar's: as part of the information and diplomatic battlespace, not as a source of moral guidance. The strategic answer is already visible on the ground — Jews voting with their feet, coming home, and building a state that does not ask for permission to live.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- *Jerusalem Post*: A strategic analysis argues Israel has to preempt Houthi entrenchment in Syria as Iran grooms them for a future multi-front ground assault on Israel. Translation: if Houthis show up on the Golan, the IDF will be morally and doctrinally obligated to hit them first, hard.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- *Jerusalem Post*: An op-ed on the Lebanon ceasefire says it's "built to fail" because the Lebanese state and army neither can nor will disarm Hezbollah, leaving Israel to enforce UNSC resolutions by airstrike. It's a reminder that 1559 and 1701 are just wallpaper, and that any real "ceasefire regime" on the northern border is going to be Israeli-made and Israeli-policed.

Domestic & Law

- *Jerusalem Post*: IDF chief Eyal Zamir is forming a special team to probe how the army mishandled Hamas's 2018 and 2022 "raid" plans — even though he ran Southern Command when the 2022 "Walls of Jericho" file landed on his desk. That means the man in the frame is now the man ordering the frame enlarged, which is either real accountability or the opening move in forcing the rest of the system to stop ducking its own responsibility.

Culture, Religion & Society

- *Jerusalem Post*: A historian using AI has identified the SS gunman in the infamous “Last Jew in Vinnitsa” photo as Jakobus Onnen, a 34-year-old German teacher who died in 1943. Pinning a real name and life story to that anonymous murderer rips away the comfortable myth that the Holocaust was carried out by faceless monsters instead of very ordinary, very educated Europeans.
- *JNS*: An essay dissects how the Palestinian movement deliberately chose “the Jew” as its central enemy because that choice buys infinite attention, moral indulgence, and a ready-made stage. The piece is harsh but accurate: much of the world only gets animated about suffering when it can be pinned on Jews, and that says more about the world than it does about us.
- *Jerusalem Post*: At the founding conference of AfD’s new youth wing “Generation Germany,” a speaker delivered a Hitler-style speech about “breeds” and “foreign influences,” forcing AfD brass into a panicked internal inquiry. Whether he was trolling or sincere almost doesn’t matter — the fact that it was even plausible in that room tells you how thin the ice is under Europe’s “never again” branding.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Post-Pope Ultimatum Window Opens** – The Pope leaves Beirut tomorrow, and US envoy Ortugus is slated to arrive immediately after with an ultimatum: either Lebanon “deals with Hezbollah” or Washington stops restraining Israel. That’s diplomatic code for green-lighting an Israeli air campaign across Bekaa and Dahieh once the papal motorcade is wheels-up. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Security Zone Doctrine Gets Teeth** – Katz and Milo are both now openly framing the Syrian Golan belt as a permanent “forward defense” zone, with Israel warning al-Sharaa via multiple capitals that more Beit Jinn-style raids will follow if Damascus doesn’t shut down cross-border staging. Syria’s public whining at the UN about “Israeli sabotage” confirms they know the next moves will be on their soil, not ours. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **UNIFIL Slides From Useless to Dangerous** – After shooting down an IDF drone and circulating a document calling Israel “the enemy,” UNIFIL is now treated by senior officers as a net liability, not a buffer. The more UNIFIL cameras and patrols hug IDF positions, the more Israel will simply ignore them in the next round and operate as if they’re part of the problem set.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Rafah Tunnels Declared Cleared** – Israeli sources assess all militants in the Rafah tunnel grid are now dead or neutralized after 40+ kills and dozens of shafts destroyed in 40 days, turning the Yellow Zone into the de facto

new border. That shrinks Hamas's maneuver space but also hardens Israel's stance: no one moves east of that line again without eating fire. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

- **Hostage Remains Become Leverage** – Hamas was observed in Jabaliya moving what Israel believes is a hostage body but is refusing to hand it over, even as two murdered hostages remain unreturned. Expect Jerusalem to treat any further “phase two” talk as theater until the last body is home, and to answer each stall with more pressure on Hamas's surviving infrastructure.
- **ISF Without Disarmament Exposed** – Pakistan has offered troops for the future International Stabilization Force but explicitly ruled out any role in disarming Hamas. That tells you exactly what most “stabilization” contributors have in mind: stand around in blue helmets while Israel is told to live next to an armed, rebranded Hamas.

Judea & Samaria

- **Northern Samaria Pressure Stays High** – Yamam and IDF units rolled up a five-man cell in Barta'a and, separately, grabbed top Tulkarm weapons dealer Ahmad Nasrallah in Irtah, both under Shin Bet guidance. This is phase two of the same project: after encircling the Tubas–Tammun belt, Israel is now stripping away the arms pipelines that make an Iranian battalion corridor on the ridge viable. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Iran Drills for the Next Round** – The IRGC is running live-fire air-defense drills around Mahshahr just as its strategists publicly call for a future “multi-front massacre assault” on Israel by the entire axis. The combination screams preparation: Tehran is hardening its skies and rehearsing its narrative for when Israel decides a preemptive strike on Iranian soil is cheaper than absorbing the next round. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Julani Regime Threats and Druze Graves** – Julani's forces in Syria released a video promising to “arrive in Jerusalem” while mass graves of Druze from Sweida are being identified in Daraa. Iran's network is broadcasting both intent and method: terrorize minorities, point the gun at Israel, and dare Jerusalem not to treat the entire Syrian belt as hostile ground.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **UNSC 2803: Authority Without Ownership** – Resolution 2803 blesses Trump's Gaza “Comprehensive Plan,” creates a Board of Peace and ISF, and ties IDF withdrawal to demilitarization benchmarks that Israel must sign off on, but stops short of Chapter VII enforcement. That means lots of international logos on the architecture, and Israel still left holding the only real veto — its security assessments and boots on the ground.

Home Front & Politics

- **Smotrich Freezes Gaza Rebuild Cash** – Finance Minister Smotrich is refusing to fund Rafah reconstruction, saying Israelis won't pay to rebuild

enemy territory while Hamas gunmen still pop out of the rubble. The delay both stiffens Israel's bargaining position against Qatar/Trump "phase two" pressure and signals to voters that security, not Western applause, sets the spending order.

- **Dimona Weapons Cache Triggers Alarm** – A kid playing Pokemon Go stumbled onto a ready-to-use weapons cache near the Dimona nuclear reactor fence, apparently planted by a Bedouin squad. It's a blunt reminder that internal smuggling and terror prep haven't stopped for the war — and that critical strategic sites remain top of the enemy's wish list.

Rafah's tunnel-clearing is reaching the point where the IDF can credibly say the east of the Strip is a different country, which forces everyone pushing "phase two" to choose between their own signatures and Israel's red lines about hostages and disarmament. Lebanon is sitting in a holding pattern that ends when two motorcades cross paths: the Pope's departure and the US envoy's arrival. That's the real window in which Hezbollah has to decide whether to eat historic humiliation or trigger the Israeli air campaign it knows it cannot absorb.

In Judea and Samaria, continued pressure on gun-runners and command belts will tell us whether Iran's battalion project on the ridge is being broken early, or just slowed. Inside Israel, the pardon process and the draft bill will determine whether the state goes into the next Iran-Hezbollah round with a coherent chain of command and a manpower model that treats Torah and service as complementary, not mutually exclusive excuses.

— Uri Zehavi · *Intelligence Editor With Modi Zehavi* · *Data + Research Analyst*

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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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