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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

Sunday, December 7

Rafah's last tunnels, Iran's northern leash, and a state that finally plans for the war it's in.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE The diplomatic map is shifting beneath the wreckage. Israel has real openings: Gulf normalization, a possible Lebanese reset, Greek military integration, and a US strategy that recognizes Israel as the region's only stable anchor. But every track depends on the same precondition — degrading Iran's ecosystem from Lebanon to Gaza to Ramallah. Without that, every “day after” becomes another rerun of the last 30 years. With it, Israel can redraw the region on its terms.

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Shavua tov, friends.

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GAZA is quiet only on paper: engineering teams are collapsing Rafah's tunnel grid while three more terrorists die crossing the Yellow Line and one fallen hero, Ran Gvili, ז"ל, still lies in Hamas's hands. In the north, mapped evacuation boxes, fresh drills on Hermon and Dov, and a Lebanese foreign minister who admits Hezbollah disarms only when Tehran says so all point in one direction: we are in the preface, not the epilogue. Iran's network keeps tightening — militias in Iraq, cash into Syrian uprisings, cyber and propaganda into the West — even as Washington declares the Middle East a diminishing priority. At home, the army stamps women in Yahalom as permanent, pushes to lengthen service, and demands a real Oct 7 commission while the legal guild clings to its throne and fringe "hilltop youth" discover the state actually has police.

Here's the map before we dive into the sectors.

Flash Brief

- **Gaza:** IDF blows more Rafah structures, kills three Yellow Line infiltrators, as Mashaal rules out disarmament or outside oversight. See *The War Today*.
 - **Hostages:** Israel's Cairo delegation tells mediators Hamas can reach Ran Gvili's body; his family and crowds demand no Phase Two until he is home. See *The War Today & Developments to Watch*.
 - **North:** Air Force hits Syrian air defenses, Lebanon's FM admits Hezbollah disarms only with Iranian approval, and major drills kick off on Hermon and Mount Dov. See *The War Today & Developments to Watch*.
 - **Iran / Axis:** US envoy calls Lebanon a failed state and Iraq's PM "powerless," while reports say Israel may strike Iran again within a year. See *Developments to Watch & Israel and the World*.
 - **Inside Israel:** IDF makes women in Yahalom permanent, Katz and Smotrich discuss returning conscription to 36 months, and Haredi hardliners plan nationwide road blockages over the draft. See *Inside Israel*.
 - **Law & politics:** Zamir demands a state Oct 7 commission, Netanyahu's pardon bid continues to sit on Herzog's desk, and leaks show tight MAG-AG-judge contacts as the Brothers in Arms funding trail raises eyebrows. See *Inside Israel*.
 - **Diplomacy & info-war:** Doha hosts the Islamist PR gala, Israel's LA consulate says Iran and Qatar bankroll violent protests, Congress moves to crack Iran's internet wall, and BBC finally orders antisemitism training. See *Israel and the World & Briefly Noted*.
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Thematic Overview

THE through-line today is compression. Rafah's last battalion is being squeezed in a smaller and smaller box while the political circus in Doha and New

York pretends Hamas will politely disarm for a Board of Peace it openly mocks. The northern front looks more like 1973's intelligence map with 2025's tools: ISR saturation, public strike boxes, and Lebanese officials saying out loud that Iran holds the key to Hezbollah's guns. Inside the house, the military speaks the language of responsibility and manpower; the legal system still speaks the language of status and impunity.

The War Today

Rafah's Tunnels Shrink, "Phase Two" Collapses Under One Body

Israel is tightening the vise on the last organized Hamas battalion in Rafah while everything around it frays. Engineering units are blowing structures tied to the tunnel grid—three more terrorists were killed after breaching the Yellow Line in separate incidents. And the pocket that produced Wednesday's RPG ambush is now a kill box with a few dozen dead Hamas fighters in the past week. Hamas's lie about "rogue cells" is hard to countenance when fighters emerged from a shaft in eastern Rafah under centralized control, detonated an explosive on an armored vehicle, and retreated. Meanwhile, the only serious anti-Hamas militia working under Israeli protection tore itself apart: Yasser Abu Shabab died in an internal fight, handing Hamas a psychological victory just as its own clans are revolting under torture, executions, and weapons seizures. His successor, Ghassan al-Duhaini — a Bedouin ex-al-Qaeda commander — vows to continue the fight but now operates in the open crosshairs of Hamas's narrative machinery.

All of this lands as Israel pushes mediators in Cairo to force the return of the last hostage's body, Ran Gvili, ז"ל — a police volunteer who saved more than 100 Israelis on October 7 before being abducted. Both Hamas and PIJ are known to have access to his remains. His family, flanked by thousands at Hostages Square, delivered the only line that matters: no Phase Two until Rani comes home. Trump wants to announce the "Board of Peace" and the second phase of his Gaza plan before Christmas, and Qatar, Norway, Turkey, and the UN are all demanding Israeli withdrawal steps while pretending disarmament can be delayed. Then Hamas's Khaled Mashaal ended the farce: he will not disarm, not surrender governance, and not permit international oversight — the peace plan's core conditions — because, as he put it, Hamas's weapons are the nation's "honor."

ASSESSMENT

The day-after structure is still dead on contact with the ground truth, regardless of what Washington might prefer. Rafah's tunnels remain military entities. Hamas's commanders still give orders from underground. Anti-Hamas clans are fragile—and stocked with jihadis. Not to mention that the last hostage body is a national red line. Mashaal's speech stripped away diplomatic pretense: Hamas intends to outwait everyone, which is what we've been highlighting since this stage of the farce began. Israel's posture remains the same — no withdrawal, no transition, no stabilization force, and no Christmas announcement until the Rafah grid is finished and Rani Gvili is home.

Mapped Strike Zones Become the New Negotiation

Israel moved from messaging to shaping. After forcing evacuations around Jibaa and Mahrouna last week, the Air Force struck Hezbollah warehouses embedded inside civilian streets — a direct preview of what comes if the year-end ultimatum is ignored. Artillery hit Yaroun, tanks massed forward, and the IDF announced major drills along Mount Dov and Hermon, signaling readiness for a rapid transition from containment to preemption. The UN quietly instructed aid agencies to activate nationwide emergency plans in expectation of broad Israeli strikes. Washington conveyed Israel's view that the LAF is not performing its duties. Israeli officials warned Iraq yet again that militia involvement will trigger strikes inside Iraq.

The Lebanese foreign minister admitted Hezbollah “cannot disarm without Iranian approval” and is only buying time to rebuild its strength. President Aoun told a UN delegation he expects a follow-up force to replace UNIFIL and welcomed foreign troops along the border — a concession Hezbollah immediately denounced as serving Israel. In Syria, Sharaa claimed Israel is “fighting ghosts” even as IDF strikes reportedly took out seven Syrian air and ground defense systems, and former Assad loyalists abroad pump cash into potential jihadist uprisings. U.S. envoy Tom Barrack cut through all that by admitting Lebanon is a failed state, Iraq's prime minister is powerless under Iranian militias, and Syria is an open corridor for every jihad franchise in the region.

ASSESSMENT

Israel is building the legal, moral, and operational record for a northern campaign. Hezbollah is paralyzed — humiliated by recent assassinations, unable to deter, and increasingly exposed by Lebanese officials themselves — while Syria turns into a multi-vector staging ground that cannot be stabilized by words. The only question remaining is who chooses the hour of the conflagration—Hezbollah, Iran, or Israel.

Hamas Abroad Braces for Assassinations as the Clans Reopen Gaza's Internal War

Hamas now expects Israeli global manhunts (after the Qatar and Beirut strikes) and has ordered senior leaders abroad to stop fixed-location meetings, rotate safehouses, and assume more attempts are imminent. U.S. intermediaries tried to assure host governments that further hits are unlikely, but Hamas openly states it does not believe a word — reading Israel's posture correctly. At the same time, the movement's internal crackdown in Gaza is accelerating: executions of alleged collaborators, public beatings, and the systematic suppression of clans and dissident militias. The death of Abu Shabab — whether from clan violence or internal rivalry — triggered a Hamas propaganda surge aimed at proving no one cooperating with Israel can survive. Yet the appointment of al-Duhaini, a far more seasoned and lethal commander, points to a different truth: the clans are reorganizing, not folding. Al-Duhaini publicly vowed to carve out “demilitarized” zones for civilians and to keep fighting Hamas until it is pushed out of southern Gaza.

ASSESSMENT

Hamas is fighting two wars: one abroad for its senior leadership's survival, and one inside Gaza for dominance over a population no longer uniformly cowed. Israel's assassination campaign is shaping Hamas's calculus far beyond the Strip, while the clan networks — messy, tribal, and unsentimental — represent the only counterweight to Hamas authority—unfortunately, they're all still ideologically compatible and in need of deradicalization. Israel's next moves will determine whether Gaza remains a mafia fiefdom or breaks open into something else entirely.

Inside Israel

Manpower, Yahalom Women, and a State That Actually Plans to Win

The IDF closed the 2.5-year pilot in Yahalom and stamped it “operational.” Three cohorts of women completed the elite combat engineering track, were integrated into hundreds of missions in Gaza and the north, and met the same standards on special platforms and tech that the unit demands from its male fighters. At the same time, Katz and Smotrich are now openly discussing extending regular service back up to 36 months, after the war exposed how fantasy-land the old manpower model was, while the IDF says it still needs 12,000 extra recruits and Haredi draft-dodger politics still keeps 80,000 full-time “students” off the books and that faction is threatening nationwide road blockages over the mere idea of real enlistment.

ASSESSMENT

The direction of travel is right: more fighters, more time in uniform, and fewer identity-based carve-outs. Yahalom's women are proof that when you set a hard combat bar and recruit serious people to meet it, the army's capability goes up. Extending service and building real frameworks for Haredim, while shutting down performative loophole bills, is how you build a war army for the demands of Iran–Hezbollah–Hamas, not for Oslo seminar panels.

Oct 7 Truth, Lawfare, and Who Actually Gets Investigated

Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir released the IDF's internal Oct 7 investigation summary and did the rare, grown-up thing: he said the army owns a systemic failure. But he demanded a full state commission with teeth to examine the political–military interface, warped concepts, intelligence that found Hamas's “Jericho Wall” plan years in advance, and why nobody built force or doctrine around it—we are all for that, if its independent of the Judiciary and political echelon. In parallel, Netanyahu's request to Herzog for a pardon from a trial that shrank from “bribery” to cigars, champagne, and a 29-year-old Bugs Bunny joke, festers on the president's desk while national unity and truth fight against political undercurrents. Herzog calls the request “extraordinary,” invokes his father's pre-emptive pardons for Shin Bet officers in the Bus 300 affair, and invites public comment while insisting only “the good of the people” will guide him — as if keeping a wartime PM chained to a courtroom three days a week is some high expression of civic virtue. New leaks show disturbing correspondence between the disgraced former

MAG and both the AG and a very senior sitting judge. At the same time, we discover Brothers in Arms pulled in 13 million shekels last year, half from two US-based NGOs whose own funding trails look suspiciously like the usual progressive philanthropy pipeline that helped convince Sinwar Israel was collapsing from within.

ASSESSMENT

There are two accountability tracks forming, and they're not equal. One is Zamir's: a state commission that can drag the entire pre-Oct 7 elite — political, legal, intelligence and military — under the same spotlight, which only works if the Judiciary can be investigated, too. The other is the lawfare track that spent six years trying to criminalize election results and now pretends a collapsing trial is sacrosanct while the country fights a regional war. A sane state does both: it clears its war leader by ending a bogus case and then holds a real commission that doesn't stop at colonels or cabinet members. Anything less leaves the gatekeepers unexamined and the people who actually missed Oct 7 free to do it again.

Settler Extremists, Ra'am's Costume Change, and the Next Knesset Map

Netanyahu has ordered the evacuation of 14 illegal hilltop outposts branded by security chiefs as hubs of “Jewish extremism and nationalist crime,” and green-lit the forcible removal of some 70 serial rioters using those sites as launchpads for pogrom-style raids on Arab villages and attacks on Israeli troops. Central Command's Avi Bluth has been warning for weeks that these clusters are a different animal from regular farms and communities; they're chaos exporters at exactly the moment Israel needs Judea and Samaria to function as a disciplined security belt, not as a YouTube revolution. Treating them more like a terror problem than a zoning nuisance — and reinforcing the Shin Bet's Jewish Division — doesn't weaken the settlement enterprise; it protects it from a tiny group trying to drag the whole project into a head-on collision with the state. However, a bit more transparency between who is doing the violence and who are just trying to live would be welcomed from the State.

At the same time, Ra'am leader Mansour Abbas is mid-rebrand: announcing that his party will formally cut institutional ties with the Shura Council and Islamic Movement, present itself as a “completely civic” party, and swear it's not part of the Muslim Brotherhood just as Trump's administration moves to designate Brotherhood chapters as terror entities. The left hears this as an invitation: a way to launder Ra'am back into their next anti-Netanyahu bloc. Smotrich hears it correctly: a wolf in slightly different wool, whose leadership still won't call Hamas a terror group or say plainly that the “resistance” must be destroyed.

ASSESSMENT

Cleaning out violent Jewish fringe groups and blocking them from hijacking outposts is what a serious, pro-settlement government does before a northern war, not a concession to Haaretz editorials—though it should be especially careful of punishing only criminals. It sharpens the line between people building real communities and a handful of kids playing Tag Meir in reverse. On the Arab side, Ra'am's makeover is about surviving a Muslim Brotherhood terror designation and staying in the coalition game, not about waking up one morning as Zionists. Any future government that treats Mansour Abbas as a harmless “civil partner” without demanding explicit support for Israel as a Jewish state and the defeat of Hamas is volunteering to repeat the Oct 7 illusion in parliamentary form.

Israel and the World

Foreign Regimes Fuel Diaspora Violence While the West Pretends It's a Protest

Israel's LA consulate admits the mobs besieging synagogues from Los Angeles to New York aren't just campus cosplay — they're funded, fed, and organized by foreign regimes, with Iran and Qatar identified as primary backers. Code Pink's weekly harassment sits on top of a CCP-linked network. Korean and Jewish community leaders were assaulted at a synagogue event that had nothing to do with Gaza and local police still treat “Zionist pigs” and smashed windows as if someone lost their temper at a school-board meeting. Across the Atlantic, the pattern is identical: journalists who refuse to launder Hamas propaganda — Danish reporter Yotam Konfino, Australian broadcaster Erin Molan, British columnist Nicole Lampert — face death threats, escorts, and professional exile, while European streets chant for the murder of Israelis with police “monitoring.” Just this morning outside of our Milan Airbnb there was new anti-Israel graffiti promoting Jew hate—lovely to walk past in the morning while wearing a kippah. Denmark's new antisemitism strategy acknowledges the crisis, but not the foreign machines powering it. The battlefield has simply migrated: intelligence services track Iran-backed weapons in the Middle East; diaspora Jews live with Iran-backed mobs in democratic capitals.

ASSESSMENT

Anti-Israel agitation is not “activism.” It is a foreign influence operation riding the West's legal immunity and political cowardice. Tehran and Doha can't break Israel's borders, so they break Jewish civic space abroad instead — with Western institutions acting as passive enablers. This is now part of Israel's security architecture: defending Jews in Los Angeles and Copenhagen is not a moral obligation; it is counterterror work against the same axis Israel is fighting in Rafah and the Beqaa. The sooner allies understand that, the sooner the violence stops.

Doha Runs the Islamist PR Summit While the West Sends Celebrities to Clap for It

Qatar's annual Doha Forum — marketed as a neutral “platform for dialogue” — again revealed itself as the world's most expensive terror-laundering operation. Syria's Sharaa, a former al-Qaeda commander burnished as a statesman, used Christiane Amanpour's stage to accuse Israel of “exporting crises,” while Qatari officials insisted Gaza's ceasefire isn't real until Israel withdraws. Turkish FM Fidan argued Hamas must keep its guns until a civilian administration magically appears; former Iranian FM Zarif worked the room like a man unburdened by decades of hostage-taking; and UN rapporteur Francesca Albanese, still employed despite a record of blood-libeling Israel, lectured about “justice.” Diaspora Minister Amichai Chikli called the event what it is: the Muslim Brotherhood's Davos. Yet Western elites — Tucker Carlson, Christiane Amanpour, think-tank mandarins, and celebrities looking for Gulf checks — happily stood in the photo line while Doha bankrolls Hamas, the Taliban, Al-Shabaab, and the ideological pipelines that now animate America's campus mobs.

ASSESSMENT

The Doha Forum is not soft power — it is hostile power dressed in linen suits. Every Western figure who attends adds legitimacy to a regime that underwrites Hamas's survival and pays for the very propaganda flooding Western streets—they're materially supporting terror, why aren't they facing those penalties? Israel's task isn't to win arguments in these rooms; it's to expose them as part of the battlespace. The axis understands that information warfare is kinetic. Western elites still pretend it's networking.

Normalization Moves Quietly Forward — If Hezbollah Falls and the PA Stops Celebrating Terror

Even as the region churns, pieces of a post-axis architecture are quietly sliding into place. Israel's ambassador in Washington delivered a direct message to the Lebanese people: if Hezbollah disarms and Beirut cuts the Iranian leash, peace and economic integration are on the table — an Abraham Accords 2.0 scenario that serious Lebanese voices increasingly crave. The Times of Israel exposé shows how close Saudi normalization was before Oct 7: the US and Riyadh had already drafted a Palestinian-related annex requiring only minor territorial upgrades, and Israel's Foreign Ministry had prepared a draft agreement. Now Tony Blair re-emerges pushing a pilot plan to seed a reformed PA into parts of Gaza — a proposal Israel hasn't rejected, though the PA's ongoing glorification of terror (documented again this week) makes it a structural fantasy without regime change in Ramallah. Meanwhile, Washington's new national security strategy declares the Middle East a receding priority now that Iran has been “greatly weakened,” and Greece locks in a €650M PULS rocket deal with Israel — the kind of alliance-building that outlives State Department mood swings.

ASSESSMENT

The diplomatic map is shifting beneath the wreckage. Israel has real openings: Gulf normalization, a possible Lebanese reset, Greek military integration, and a US strategy that recognizes Israel as the region's only stable anchor. But every track depends on the same precondition — degrading Iran's ecosystem from Lebanon to Gaza to Ramallah. Without that, every “day after” becomes another rerun of the last 30 years. With it, Israel can redraw the region on its terms.

Briefly Noted

FRONTLINE & SECURITY

- *JNS*: A new report links Hezbollah to a major global ransomware outfit, showing the terror group is expanding from rockets and bunkers into cyber-crime revenue. Iran's proxy is diversifying its funding streams, which is exactly why Israel treats the entire axis as one integrated threat network.
- *Times of Israel*: Lebanon's foreign minister admitted publicly that Hezbollah cannot disarm without Iranian approval and is simply trying to “buy time” to rebuild. It's the clearest confirmation yet that Beirut is an occupied franchise, and any “negotiation” with Lebanon is really a negotiation with Tehran.
- *Jerusalem Post*: A Reuters investigation found Assad-era loyalists in exile are funneling millions into raising sectarian militias from Russia and Lebanon to destabilize Syria's new government. It shows the Syrian battlespace remains volatile and fractured — a reminder that any “postwar plan” involving Syria is built over a live volcano.

DIPLOMACY & GEOPOLITICS

- *JNS*: Diaspora Minister Amichai Chikli blasted the Doha Forum as a terror-laundering gala featuring the Muslim Brotherhood's benefactors and Western media stars. Qatar's ability to host this circus while bankrolling Hamas proves why the region's “mediator” is also its arsonist.
- *Times of Israel*: New York Governor Kathy Hochul shut down incoming mayor Zohran Mamdani's fantasy of arresting Netanyahu, noting mayors can't detain foreign heads of state. The episode highlights how anti-Israel radicals in US politics now treat international law as cosplay while elected adults scramble to clean up the mess.
- *Times of Israel*: The acting ICC prosecutor floated the idea of an in-absentia hearing against Netanyahu, complaining that US sanctions put court officials on “terrorist lists.” It's another reminder that the ICC's Gaza crusade is political theater — a struggling institution trying to salvage credibility by targeting democracies it knows will never cooperate.
- *Jerusalem Post*: US lawmakers introduced the FREEDOM Act to study satellite-based and drone-based tools to pierce Iran's censorship wall. If implemented, it would weaken one of the regime's most effective domestic weapons — digital isolation.

DOMESTIC & LAW

- *Times of Israel*: As Israel celebrates staying in Eurovision, coalition moves to gut or control the public broadcaster risk making Israel ineligible next year. It's a classic example of political overreach creating strategic blow-back — in this case, handing a soft-power win to Israel's loudest detractors.
- *JNS*: The BBC finally ordered staff-wide antisemitism training after years of scandals and Israel-slanted reporting that crossed into open Jew-baiting. It's damage control, but it also shows how mainstream outlets only confront their rot when the evidence becomes too public to bury.

CULTURE, RELIGION & SOCIETY

- *Ynet*: Christmas festivities returned to Bethlehem after two years of wartime shutdowns, though tourism and foreign travel remain sharply depressed. The West Bank economy's fragility — and the city's dependence on Israel's security situation — is visible in every half-full restaurant and checkpoint bottleneck.

Developments to Watch

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Hostage-body leverage hardens the ceiling on Phase II** — Hamas and Islamic Jihad's refusal to release Ran Gvili's body — even as mediators claim "momentum" — ensures no Israeli government will enter Trump's Phase II while the last hostage remains underground. This is now the single immovable condition shaping all Cairo diplomacy.
- **Turkey and Qatar push a sequencing Israel will never accept** — Ankara insists disarmament must be last, not first, and Doha says the current lull is only a "pause" until Israel withdraws.
- **Anti-Hamas militias remain fragile and easily exploited** — Abu Shabab's killing — and al-Duhaini's vow to "fight Hamas with more determination" — show the clan ecosystem remains combustible but unreliable. Israel cannot build a day-after architecture on forces Hamas can decapitate in a hallway quarrel.

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Hezbollah admits the truth: Iran decides if it disarms** — Lebanon's foreign minister openly said Hezbollah "cannot disarm without Iranian approval." This removes the last fig leaf of Lebanese sovereignty and sharpens the Dec. 31 disarm-or-else deadline into a confrontation with Tehran, not Beirut.

- **ISR surge + mapped strike boxes = pre-war geometry** — Israeli UAVs, jets, and public evacuation maps signal shaping operations; UN agencies preparing for “nationwide” Israeli strikes confirms the international system reads it the same way.
- **Assad’s fall didn’t stabilize Syria — it atomized it** — Reuters shows Assad-era loyalists financing 50,000 fighters and competing for underground weapons rooms while the new regime tries to contain them. A fractured northern theater means Israel’s Golan security doctrine must assume multiple successor threats, not one unified state.
- **Syrian air defenses took hits — and are likely being mapped** — Reports of seven Syrian air and ground defense systems struck underscore that the IDF is pruning threats ahead of any Lebanon escalation. Beit Jinn and the Damascus belt are already treated as Hezbollah’s corridor, not Syria’s sovereign space.

Judea & Samaria

- **Israeli crackdown on terror infrastructure parallels ridge-wide hardening** — Aqab arrests, weapons seizures, and the detention of wanted operatives show the ridge remains a live front even as attention shifts north. Iran’s financial and weapons pipelines — including Turkey-linked laundering — remain priority targets.
- **Government moves to muzzle Jewish extremist cells** — Netanyahu reportedly ordered evacuations of 14 fringe outposts and removal of ~70 violent agitators, with Shin Bet asked to treat them like other security threats.

Israel & the World

- **Qatar’s influence machine grows bolder — and more visible** — Doha’s “Forum” pulled in Western anchors, influencers, and terror-state dignitaries, letting the Muslim Brotherhood’s global ATM launder legitimacy. Israel reads this as soft-power warfare: the same hands mediating Gaza bankroll the ideology that sustains Hamas.
- **Anti-Israel networks in the West are foreign-funded and escalating** — The LA consulate warns foreign actors, including Iran and Qatar, are bankrolling violent protests targeting synagogues and diplomats. This ties diaspora hostility directly to the regional axis — not spontaneous activism, but imported pressure.

Closing Analysis

THREE things hardened today. First, Phase Two of Trump’s Gaza plan is now openly dead until two conditions are met: Rafah’s tunnel command is destroyed and Ran Gvili, the last hostage, comes home for burial. Oddly, some people are, and have been, pretending otherwise. Turkey, Qatar, and the UN can juggle sequencing all they like. Once Mashaal admitted Hamas

will not disarm, not step aside, and not accept oversight, any “transition” without Israeli bayonets is fantasy.

Second, the north crossed another invisible line. When Lebanon’s own foreign minister admits Hezbollah can only disarm with Iranian approval, and the IDF is already hitting Syrian air defenses while drilling on Hermon and Dov, the December 31 “disarm or else” date stops being a talking point and becomes a scheduling problem. The choice is no longer between war and peace; it is between a war on Iran’s timetable or Israel’s.

Third, inside Israel, you can see a state trying to rearm reality against two different illusions: that you can run a modern military on 30-month conscription and sectoral exemptions, and that you can keep a wartime prime minister chained to a collapsing trial while pretending it doesn’t affect national resilience. Yahalom’s women, Katz–Smotrich talking 36 months, Zamir demanding a real commission (though it needs more power than he says) — these are the grown-up moves. Evicting a handful of violent outpost kids and pulling the mask off Ra’am’s “civic” costume are more of the same: separating allies from liabilities before the next round.

The next inflection points are already on the clock: the Cairo answer on Ran Gvili, Hezbollah’s behavior under the Hermon drills, and Herzog’s decision on whether Israel goes into the northern campaign with a clear chain of command or with its prime minister burning eight hours a day in a courtroom. The fronts are not waiting for us to decide.

— Uriel Zehavi • Intelligence Editor With Modi Zehavi • Data + Research Analyst

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