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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

Friday, December 12

Hamas hides a body to buy Phase II. Hezbollah hides under storm cover to buy time. Washington sells “stabilization” and hands Israel the invoice.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE Israel remains the only address not apologizing for Jewish self-defense. The West relearns old lessons. Pull toward Israel grows as clarity replaces nostalgia.

CLASSIFICATION

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Flash Brief

- **Gaza:** Hamas continues stalling on Ran Gvili; Israel freezes Phase II and fortifies the Yellow Line
 - **North:** Storm cover enables Hezbollah redeployments; IDF hits Radwan training sites across southern Lebanon
 - **Iran:** Missile production restarts, proxies probe thresholds and corridors
 - **Judea & Samaria:** Settlement legalization expands; security posture remains proactive
 - **Home front:** Storm Byron floods the south; emergency services manage response
 - **Diplomacy:** Washington pushes timelines and rubble cleanup; Qatar refuses funding
 - **Diaspora/info-war:** Antisemitic hate narratives spread; Israel funds Jewish education abroad
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The War Today

Gaza's Ceasefire is Just Blackmail

Hamas refuses disarmament, with Khaled Mashal framing weapons as the “soul” of the Palestinian cause. The organization cites “weather-related difficulties” preventing location of hostage remains. Israel has fortified the Yellow Line as a lethal boundary and announced no concrete, Rafah reopening, or reconstruction until Gvili's body returns.

Hamas operates a mafia state in its territory: charging displaced families rent, executing rivals, and cracking down on anti-Hamas militias. Intelligence assessments reveal “a majority of journalists killed in Gaza were Hamas or PIJ operatives,” exposing propaganda infrastructure.

ASSESSMENT

Hamas converts a hostage's body into a veto over Israeli victory. Israel's response—sealing Gaza and freezing aid—removes ambiguity. Either Hamas returns remains and accepts disarmament, or Gaza remains unfinished.

The North Slides From Containment to Scheduling

Storm Byron provides concealment as Hezbollah redeploys fighters into southern Lebanon while civilians evacuate villages. Washington relayed a warning: if Hezbollah retains precision missiles and UAVs past year's end, Israel will strike Dahieh and the Bekaa Valley.

The IDF dismantles Radwan Force training infrastructure beyond symbolic targets. Syria's instability layer persists: American envoys discuss opportunity while Israeli intelligence observes a rebranded jihadist regime making new demands and parades anti-Israel rhetoric.

Tehran maintains operational control—missile production resumed, proxies probe corridors, diplomacy buys time rather than achieving peace.

ASSESSMENT

Hezbollah bets diplomatic noise delays the inevitable past December 31. Israel conducts pre-war preparation through early degradation. Escalation won't be gradual if miscalculation occurs; it will be decisive.

Inside Israel

Authority Returns to the Elected State

The government legalized 19 communities in Judea and Samaria, including return to Ganim and Kadim, reversing a two-decade freeze. Fringe violent outposts faced evacuation, drawing lines between sovereign policy and lawless activity.

Prime Minister Netanyahu warned former security chiefs against shaping the October 7 inquiry, demanding a broad commission modeled on the U.S. 9/11 process. National Security Minister Ben-Gvir ordered dismantling of an illegal shrine glorifying a terrorist figure near Haifa.

ASSESSMENT

Government separates legitimate sovereignty from chaos—strengthening settlements while policing extremists, defending elected authority while demanding accountability, removing terror symbols rather than debating them.

The Draft Debate Leaves Theory and Enters Mathematics

The Haredi draft debate crossed into security and economics rather than culture war. Religious Zionist scholars stated the halachic obligation, while the Bank of Israel calculated expanding Haredi enlistment by roughly 7,500 annually could save NIS 9–14 billion yearly, reduce reserve overuse, and strengthen workforce participation.

Netanyahu continues coalition consultations; Smotrich's camp demands passing workable legislation now and tightening later, ending the fiction that burdens can rest exclusively on reservists.

ASSESSMENT

Perfect solutions are unacceptable; movement is required immediately. Israel fights multi-front conflict with demographic pressures mounting underneath. Draft law moving thousands into service represents progress. The direction proves correct; only acceleration remains questionable.

Rain Tests the System — and It Holds

Storm Byron hit unevenly. Tel Aviv absorbed rain with limited disruption while Ashkelon, coastal plains, Negev, and desert corridors experienced flooding and rescues. The IDF imposed weather lockdown without incident; critical infrastructure and emergency services functioned.

The storm delivered strategic value: drought relief. Farmers reported deep soil saturation and revived winter crops after a declared drought year. Government approved NIS 100 million Eastern Negev development—airfield planning, police reinforcement, transport, energy innovation, and education.

ASSESSMENT

Resilience means drainage systems, farmers planting before rain, police responding, and budgets strengthening weak spots. Periphery development and infrastructure represent main state responsibilities after security.

Israel and the World

Diplomacy Wants Photos; Israel Gets Invoices

Foreign capitals accelerate familiar patterns: push Phase II timelines, discuss stabilization, avoid disarmament, and shift costs to Jerusalem. Washington prepares deploying an International Stabilization Force under American command while focusing on rubble clearance and reconstruction sequencing—after Israel agreed covering hundreds of millions in Gaza debris removal.

Qatar publicly refuses funding rebuilding. Turkey lobbies entering Gaza through the ISF. Germany and Italy circle advisory roles. Hamas still withholds remains and rejects disarmament. U.S. officials insist aid flows prove progress “as if concrete mixers neutralize Kalashnikovs.”

ASSESSMENT

Cost externalization masquerades as diplomacy. Phase II locks Israel into paying for uncontrollable outcomes while preserving Hamas’s gun monopoly under U.N. branding. Israel enforces red lines now or faces invoicing for the next war later.

Washington Argues Maps While Israel Builds Facts

Lawmakers debated President Trump’s “meaning” regarding annexation. Republicans clarified extending Israeli civil law to Jewish communities aligns with prior Trump vision and reflects existing control realities. Democrats recycled Ukraine analogies and demographic arguments while ignoring Palestinian Authority pay-for-slay programs.

Code Pink activists screamed at Israeli regional leaders outside hearing rooms, underscoring distance between policy debate and activist reality.

ASSESSMENT

U.S. discourse remains frozen in hypotheticals while Israel operates in facts. Sovereignty arguments bounce between committees; security control on the ground advances because threats don't await hearings.

Grass Looks Greener—Until You Read the Tea Leaves

The global Jewish map flips. Some Israelis fantasize leaving war zones; diaspora Jews calculate exits from societies where antisemitism is ambient. Israel invests tens of millions in U.S. Jewish education through Project Aleph Bet, reinforcing identity as Western institutions falter.

Scholars work reframing anti-Zionism as hate movement rather than semantic debate, while Hamas's Western stenographers face exposure. Israelis enjoying Broadway fantasies should remember history: the chorus always changes.

ASSESSMENT

Israel remains the only address not apologizing for Jewish self-defense. The West relearns old lessons. Pull toward Israel grows as clarity replaces nostalgia.

Briefly Noted**Diplomacy & Geopolitics**

- **JNS op-ed** argues Israel should condition the \$35B Leviathan gas expansion on verified Egyptian security performance in Sinai and Gaza border, warning against bailing out Cairo without enforcement mechanisms. Energy represents leverage; leverage without conditions becomes charity.
- **U.S. UN envoy Mike Waltz** toured Israel's northern border and Kerem Shalom, publicly backing pressure on Iran and Hezbollah degradation while meeting Ran Gvili's family. Washington signals adult positioning, though sovereignty undermining concerns persist.
- **Arutz Sheva/JNS op-ed** urges sustained information campaign against Western Palestinian state recognition, arguing it rewards terror and boomerangs on Europe.

Domestic & Law

- **Likud MK Tally Gotliv** alleged a Shin Bet officer met a Hamas commander at Erez on October 6 night, framing it as part of broader betrayal narrative. Gotliv routinely weaponizes such claims against security-legal establishment; absent corroboration, treat as political accusation rather than established fact.

Culture, Religion & Society

- **Archaeologists** surveying Horbat Bet Zecharia in Gush Etzion found Hellenistic-era sling bullets and Seleucid-linked coin potentially evidencing Judah Maccabee battlefield. Jewish rootedness predates modern slogans by millennia.

- **UK independent MP Iqbal Mohamed** shared posts falsely claiming the Bibas family were killed by Israeli bombs—blood libel laundering through parliamentary status rather than legitimate criticism.
- **Sports commentators Shannon Sharpe and Chad Johnson** said Jews “own everything” on podcast, recycling classic conspiracy tropes with laugh tracks functioning as permission for real-world hostility.
- **McGill PhD student Adam Louis-Klein** builds campaign labeling anti-Zionism as hate movement independent from antisemitism debate, arguing “Zionist” functions as socially acceptable slur unlocking exclusion.
- **Lawfare Project** investigates whether Canadian charities routed funds to extremist entities based on filing irregularities. Paper trails potentially expose humanitarian branding masking political warfare.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon/Syria)

- **Radwan Training Sites Hit** – IDF struck multiple Hezbollah training compounds across southern Lebanon and western Bekaa, expanding beyond border targets. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Storm Cover, Fighter Redeployments** – Severe weather reduces surveillance as Hezbollah pushes operatives into border villages; civilians self-evacuate ahead of expected strikes. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Washington’s Beirut Message Hardens** – U.S. warnings specify Dahieh and Bekaa consequences if precision missiles/UAVs remain past December 31, narrowing deniability. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Syria’s ‘Soft Hand’ Pitch Frays** – U.S. envoys sell opportunity while Damascus adds demands and parades anti-Israel rhetoric; Israeli Hermon and buffer zone positions remain fixed. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Yellow Line Becomes Concrete** – Engineering works continue along Khan Yunis/Salah al-Din as infiltrators face neutralization on contact, hardening into de facto border.
- **Hamas Taxes the Tents** – Hamas charges displaced Gazans rent and executes rivals while stalling on remains under weather excuses, forcing Phase II optics without surrendering weapons.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Tehran Talks, Missiles Turn** – Iran openly restarts missile production while demanding IAEA “wartime safeguards”; Trump publicly warns rebuilds face destruction absent agreement. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

- **Jordan Corridor Chatter** – Militia messaging references transit routes toward Jordan Valley; Israel's accelerated eastern defenses suggest planners treat this as live probe.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **UNRWA Sanctions Near Decision** – Washington weighs terrorism-linked sanctions including potential FTO designation, disrupting donor pipelines.
- **ISF Before Disarmament** – U.S. moves appointing American general for Gaza ISF while prioritizing rubble clearance, creating timeline collision with Israeli hostage/disarmament red lines.

Home Front & Politics

- **Storm Stress, System Holds** – Nationwide flooding strained municipalities; Tel Aviv infrastructure largely absorbed impact. Tests highlight resilience locations and budget requirements.
- **Draft Math Enters Lawmaking** – Coalition talks continue as religious-Zionist halachic backing meets Bank of Israel economics, pressuring workable bill passage now.
- **IAF Discipline Case** – Flight-school squadron commander dismissed over OPSEC violations involving cadets, signaling zero tolerance for discipline lapses during rising operational tempo.

Key Takeaways

1. Gaza's clock measures Ran Gvili's remains. No body returned means no Phase II, no reconstruction theater.
2. Watch Hezbollah developments during the next two weeks. Year-end approaches quickly; weather concealment and precision-missile deadlines compress escalation into narrow windows where miscalculation faces swift punishment.
3. Jerusalem's draft legislation, sovereignty decisions, and governance either keep pace with war or the conflict teaches MKs lessons through hard experience.

Israel needs fewer illusions, more enforcement, and a state remembering who provides power.

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P.S. Forward this to anyone still calling this “a ceasefire.” Then check on them—they may also think UNIFIL functions as police force.

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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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