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READER EDITION

December 17, 2025

ISRAEL BRIEF

Wednesday, December 17

Pressure migrates from borders to boardrooms—and the threats follow.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE Germany's industrial engagement matters more than a dozen speeches. Embassy moves matter because they harden facts. Red Sea realignment matters because shipping lanes decide power. Israel's task is to double down on partners who convert values into action and bypass forums that substitute moral performance for responsibility. Europe will continue to split between states that hedge and states that deliver. Israel should invest accordingly.

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Israel Brief: Wednesday, December 17

Pressure migrates from borders to boardrooms—and the threats follow.

By Uriel Zehavi ·     Dec 17, 2025

Opening Statement

Shalom, friends.

No single headline changes the battlefield today—hostile movement gets removed and “rebuild” stays expensive. Elsewhere, though, the map is getting messier. An international force is being marketed without a mandate to confront Hamas. Regional airpower shopping is back on the table. The north is still kinetic even when diplomacy asks for a pause. Meanwhile, the diaspora isn’t “news from abroad” anymore—it’s a front, and copycats move faster than politicians. And this morning’s signal from Washington is the same story in a different costume: support language on the podium, pressure mechanics in the machinery. The ISF pitch keeps inflating, Pakistan is being leaned on for troops, and travel restrictions expand in ways that will land hardest on ordinary people, not terrorists.

Action Required — Stop Blood Libel at Scale

Netflix is preparing to distribute *Farha*, a fictionalized blood libel that portrays IDF soldiers as sadistic child-murderers.

This is pure incitement—even if it is masquerading as cinema. It will fuel more real-world antisemitism.

Please sign the letter demanding Netflix pull the film. It takes 30 seconds.

[Remove “Farha” from Netflix](#)

Flash Brief

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gaza: IDF enforces approach-and-rebuild as hostile acts; Hamas recruits and pushes new indirect talks.• Northern Front: IDF strikes Hezbollah operatives across a wider geography; travel warnings harden as escalation risk rises.• Judea & Samaria: Attempted ramming at Elazar Junction triggers cordons and searches; friction concentrates in known corridors.• Home Front: Prison authorities warn of imminent unrest as | <ul style="list-style-type: none">terrorists probe facilities and map guard patterns.• Diaspora: Bondi drives global threat posture; US/UK incidents and a targeted killing sharpen copycat risk.• U.S. Track: ISF recruitment widens as Washington pressures Pakistan for troops; mandate still dodges Hamas.• Cyber: Israel–U.S. drill signals rising attempted disruptions against national systems beyond what’s publicly known. |
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The War Today

FORCE HOLDS THE LINE AS DIPLOMACY TRIES TO RUN PAST IT

Israel's military posture in Gaza has settled into a deliberate enforcement phase that treats movement, rebuilding, and approach as hostile acts regardless of ceasefire optics. Along Rafah's Yellow Line, IDF forces continue systematic clearance operations—seizing weapons, dismantling tunnel-linked infrastructure, and eliminating multiple armed operatives who crossed into Israeli-controlled zones while carrying suspicious objects. These are meant to reflect a standing rule-set designed to deny Hamas the ability to normalize presence or regenerate combat power under “truce” cover. Simultaneously, Hamas is attempting to convert enforcement friction into diplomatic leverage—they're seeking renewed talks while actively recruiting thousands of new operatives and rebuilding logistics. And the West loves to fall for it. Washington's parallel push to advance Phase II—via an International Stabilization Force whose mandate remains undefined and whose contributors refuse to confront Hamas—has introduced mounting pressure to decouple Israeli force posture from Hamas compliance, even as the last hostage remains unrecovered and Hamas publicly rejects disarmament.

ASSESSMENT

Israel is acting like a grown up, while the international diplomatic corps... well, let's say they're on toddler mode — tantrums and pre-school logic. Hamas understands the gap and is exploiting it—recruiting, rebuilding, and bargaining—betting that external pressure will constrain Israel before attrition constrains their terror network. The ISF framework, as presently discussed, does not resolve this. It risks freezing the battlefield in a configuration that preserves Hamas's coercive capacity while shifting enforcement costs onto Israel. The decisive variable is not whether Phase II advances, but whether enforcement remains tied to concrete conditions—hostage return, disarmament, and loss of territorial control. Any sequence that breaks that linkage will not end the war, it'll just move the next one up on the calendar.

CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS STACK WHILE DETERRENCE TIGHTENS

Israel continues to treat Hezbollah's post-ceasefire reconstruction as a targetable offense rather than a tolerated ambiguity. IDF strikes over the past 24 hours eliminated multiple Hezbollah operatives across southern Lebanon, including in areas well north of the immediate border, underscoring that geography alone no longer confers immunity. These actions come amid nearly two thousand recorded Hezbollah violations since the ceasefire took effect and growing international recognition that Lebanon's “disarmament choreography” has not altered Hezbollah's force posture south of the Litani. Concurrently, Western governments are escalating travel warnings and contingency planning, reflecting shared assessments that the current equilibrium is unstable. Hezbollah's leadership remains largely intact, its infrastructure regeneration ongoing, and its deterrence calculus increasingly compressed by deadlines rather than diplomacy.

ASSESSMENT

Israel's strikes are deliberately aimed at degrading Hezbollah's connective tissue—operatives, logistics, and rebuild pathways—rather than waiting for a casus belli that would arrive on Hezbollah's terms. Lebanon's unwillingness to seize weapons has rendered its assurances operationally irrelevant, while Iranian backing continues to substitute for Lebanese sovereignty. The accumulation of violations, coupled with expanding strike geography and international risk warnings, points to a narrowing corridor between managed attrition and decisive escalation.

Inside Israel

CONFUSION MEETS PERMANENT LITIGATION

Israel's governing system is operating under simultaneous wartime load and institutional friction, with authority contested across courts, cabinet, and security agencies. The prime minister's criminal proceedings resumed amid ongoing scheduling tension between judicial process and executive responsibility, while parallel legal disputes intensified around the Sde Teiman leak investigation. Justice Ministry efforts to appoint an independent supervisor ran aground on court-imposed criteria, even as new reporting alleges senior military legal officials obscured evidence during the original probe. At the same time, the Military Advocate General closed a separate fatal-incident case in southern Lebanon, opting for internal discipline rather than criminal charges. Together, these underscore a system attempting to adjudicate wartime conduct through peacetime legal mechanisms—often slowly, publicly, and under maximal political strain.

ASSESSMENT

Israel's legal architecture is absorbing battlefield decisions, intelligence failures, and political conflict all at once—and it is showing stress fractures. The courts insist on procedural purity (and face saving); the executive insists on operational latitude and rigorous investigation; the military legal corps is caught between them. This is not really about individual cases or personalities. It is whether governance continues to fragment into veto points and post-facto adjudication. A state cannot fight external enemies while internally unsure who governs, at least in practice. This tension sits at the heart of Israel's unfinished constitutional order.

DRAFT EVASION TURNS POLITICAL FICTION INTO SECURITY RISK

As reservists continue extended rotations, data show ultra-Orthodox enlistment remains largely flat despite rapid demographic growth, even as new legislation inches forward under coalition pressure. Against this backdrop, public ceremonies awarding large cash grants to draft evaders—financed by private communal networks—have sharpened resentment across serving populations. Simultaneously, the state debates investigative frameworks for the October 7 failures while delaying binding service reform—leaving the burden concentrated on the same shrinking pool of combat and reserve units. The gap between rhetoric and obligation is measurable in fatigue, deployment cycles, and force readiness.

ASSESSMENT

A country at war cannot sustain a dual moral economy—one of duty and one of exemption—without eroding cohesion and capacity. Every month of delay hardens a reality in which service is treated as optional by some and inescapable by others. That imbalance is just socially corrosive. It is strategically dangerous, if not disastrous. Israel does not lack manpower—it lacks having the men show up. The Maccabees would be ashamed. Any viable reform must convert demographic growth into service pathways that respect religious life without outsourcing defense to the same exhausted few.

SECURITY IS LOCAL BEFORE IT IS STRATEGIC

Internal security pressures are concentrating in specific fault lines: prisons, border cities, and neglected urban zones. Prison authorities warn of imminent large-scale unrest as long-term terrorist inmates—now stripped of release expectations—map facilities and probe guard patterns. In the north, Kiryat Shmona residents are protesting a second wave of departure amid stalled reconstruction, shuttered commerce, and unfulfilled compensation. The city risks permanent depopulation. In Judea and Samaria, local leaders flag dangerous congestion and inconsistent security. While in south Tel Aviv, permanent Border Police deployments have begun after years of resident complaints over crime and illegal migration. Across these arenas, the pattern is consistent: where governance is thin, security degrades.

ASSESSMENT

Internal security is presence, predictability, and follow-through. Prisons ignored become battlegrounds. Border cities neglected become empty buffers. Urban zones abandoned to disorder eventually require forceful correction. Israel's challenge is not choosing between civil rights and security, but between proactive governance and reactive escalation. The state cannot ask citizens to return, endure, or comply if it cannot demonstrate competence where they live.

Israel and the World

FROM CHANT TO GUNFIRE: DIASPORA AT THE FRONT

The Bondi Beach Hanukkah massacre—carried out by a father-and-son cell inspired by ISIS ideology, connected to extremist preaching networks, and preceded by foreign travel to jihad-linked zones—was not spontaneous or isolated. It unfolded after years of tolerated “globalize the intifada” rhetoric, selective enforcement, and official reluctance to name antisemitic incitement as a security threat. Parallel, though mercifully smaller, incidents in New York, Brooklyn, London, and commercial spaces across the West reinforce this. Jewish visibility itself has become a trigger. The Brookline murder of a pro-Israel nuclear scientist adds a second, uglier layer: targeted violence that looks less like mob heat and more like ideological selection. If attackers can choose a Hanukkah crowd in Sydney, they can choose a front-door target in Massachusetts. Governments responded with condolences, police surges, and unity language, but in several cases simultaneously constrained Jewish memorials, downplayed ideological causality, or redirected blame toward gun laws and abstract “community tensions.”

ASSESSMENT

This is not a policing failure alone. It is a permission-structure failure. When genocidal language is normalized as protest and Islamist networks are treated as speech communities rather than security ecosystems, violence is the unavoidable downstream output. Bondi should remove any doubt that diaspora Jewish life is at risk (though that would be a somewhat late realization)—predictable calendars, soft targets, and symbolic events are being selected deliberately. Israel must treat global Jewish security forcefully as it manages the homefront's security. Intelligence sharing, naming sponsors and ideologies, and refusing the fiction that antisemitism is disconnected from anti-Israel agitation. Western states face a binary choice: enforce the line before the next attack, or keep discovering—after funerals—that “tolerance” has a body count.

STABILIZATION TALK MASKS A SHRINKING MILITARY EDGE

U.S.-led diplomacy is accelerating toward frameworks that manage optics rather than remove threats. The International Stabilization Force discussions continue without a mandate to confront Hamas, even as Washington pressures Israel over enforcement actions taken during a ceasefire Hamas openly exploits to rearm. Israel is confronting a second-order strategic risk: renewed U.S. discussions to sell F-35s across the region—to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, potentially Turkey, and possibly reviving UAE interest—threatening Israel's qualitative military edge. Washington is now pressuring Pakistan to contribute troops while Islamabad signals their perspective of “disarming Hamas is not our job.” That is the ISF's core problem in one sentence. In parallel, U.S. entry restrictions are expanding to include Palestinian Authority travel documents, a reminder that American “stability” policy often lands as blunt border policy. Jerusalem is responding pragmatically, drafting a compensatory package of additional fighter squadrons and munitions, while signaling that enforcement on the ground will not pause to preserve diplomatic narratives.

ASSESSMENT

This is the familiar American tradeoff: managed calm over decisive outcomes. A stabilization force that will not fight Hamas stabilizes only one thing—the illusion that someone else is responsible for disarmament. At the same time, proliferating fifth-generation airpower in hostile or unreliable hands compresses Israel's margin for error. I mean, what could go wrong letting Qatar and other Hamas-allies have advanced fighter jets? Israel's response—securing additional capabilities while continuing enforcement—reflects an understanding Washington often avoids. Deterrence is not preserved by process, but by superiority. Israel should continue leveraging U.S. alliance benefits while planning for a future in which American arms policy is driven less and less with Israeli survival in mind. Israel must lock in capability now, before timelines and production slots harden against it.

REALIGNMENT FAVORS THOSE WHO DELIVER, NOT THOSE WHO LECTURE

Beneath institutional theater, a quieter realignment is underway. Germany sent a major business and defense-industry delegation to Israel, expanding cooperation in logistics, drones, space, and advanced manufacturing even as parts of Europe posture rhetorically. The Czech Republic signaled an embassy move to Jerusalem, joining Argentina and potentially Hungary in translating alignment into sovereign action. At the same time, the Middle East map continues to fragment along power lines rather than slogans: southern

Yemen's UAE-backed consolidation alters Red Sea dynamics, potentially constraining Iranian-aligned Houthis and opening indirect strategic opportunities tied to Abu Dhabi's interests. These moves contrast sharply with EU lawfare, boycott experimentation, and symbolic condemnations that produce headlines but no leverage.

ASSESSMENT

Germany's industrial engagement matters more than a dozen speeches. Embassy moves matter because they harden facts. Red Sea realignment matters because shipping lanes decide power. Israel's task is to double down on partners who convert values into action and bypass forums that substitute moral performance for responsibility. Europe will continue to split between states that hedge and states that deliver. Israel should invest accordingly.

Briefly Noted

ACTION REQUIRED

- **Action Network:** A petition urges Netflix to pull “Farha,” a 1948-set film it argues depicts IDF soldiers committing fabricated atrocities. Please take a moment to ensure blood-libel cinema doesn’t stay on screen—it becomes social permission for real-world Jew-hatred, and Netflix knows exactly what it’s selling.

CULTURE, RELIGION & SOCIETY

- **Jerusalem Post:** Music journalist Eve Barlow admits she was pushed out of mainstream pop-culture media after openly embracing her Jewish identity and defending Israel. (Not familiar at all to this writer.)
- **Jerusalem Post:** A new study finds ex-Haredim experience isolation and anxiety similar to immigrants, struggling with identity and belonging after leaving their communities. The draft-and-cohesion fight isn’t only about enlistment numbers—it’s about whether Israeli society builds workable bridges or manufactures permanent internal exile.
- **Times of Israel:** Austria’s broadcaster says Eurovision 2026 will allow Palestinian flags and won’t mask crowd boos during Israel’s performance. Cultural institutions are normalizing the ritual humiliation of Jews as “authentic atmosphere”—and then acting shocked when rhetoric metastasizes into terror.

FRONTLINE & SECURITY

- **Jerusalem Post:** Greece is accelerating a major military modernization plan that prominently integrates Israeli defense technology and systems. Israel’s defense partnerships are hardening into a regional deterrence web—useful leverage as Europe’s politics wobble and Turkey’s posture keeps becoming more overtly hostile.

DIPLOMACY & GEOPOLITICS

- **Times of Israel:** An Italian appeals court freed an imam detained after defending October 7 as “not violence,” prompting PM Giorgia Meloni to publicly blast the judges and signal an appeal. Europe is still arguing whether

jihad apologetics are a “security problem” while the security problem keeps recruiting.

- **Jerusalem Post:** Trump announces a “total and complete blockade” of sanctioned oil tankers entering or leaving Venezuela, a move likely to ripple into Iran-linked sanctions evasion networks. Every laundering lane closed to Tehran forces them to reroute cashflows—often by leaning harder on proxies and gray-market logistics elsewhere.
- **Times of Israel:** Israel denied entry to six Canadian MPs at the Allenby Crossing, saying the delegation was sponsored by a group tied to a designated terror entity, while MPs alleged mistreatment at the crossing. “Civil society” trips are increasingly a financing-and-legitimacy pipeline, and states are finally starting to treat the funding source as the story.

Developments to Watch

NORTHERN FRONT (LEBANON / SYRIA)

- **Dual strikes widen the map** — The IDF struck a Hezbollah operative in Taybeh and then hit another near Seblin, roughly 40 km north of the border. “Ceasefire lines” don’t protect rebuild networks, and retaliation incentives rise when safe zones shrink. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **UK travel warning hardens** — Britain expanded its Lebanon advisory, urging against travel across most of the south and warning against large parts of Beirut and the Bekaa. When risk language shifts this sharply, it usually reflects shared assessments of compressed escalation timelines.
- **Operations paused before summit** — Israel reportedly postponed planned days of fighting in Lebanon and suspended operations across arenas ahead of the end-month Netanyahu-Trump summit. A pause like this buys diplomacy one last shot—and gives Hezbollah room to test the edges of restraint without paying an immediate price.

GAZA & SOUTHERN THEATER

- **Yellow Line breachers keep dying** — IDF troops eliminated two terrorists on separate days after they crossed the Yellow Line and approached with suspicious behavior/objects.
- **Hamas rearm tempo reappears** — Reporting indicates Hamas has recruited roughly 3,000 new operatives since the ceasefire began while rebuilding basic infrastructure and reorganizing weapons stocks. Phase II talk is merely camouflage if Hamas is rebuilding the force it promises to “decommission.” **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

JUDEA & SAMARIA

- **Elazar Junction ramming attempt** — A suspected ramming attack occurred at Elazar Junction; the driver fled and the IDF is cordoning nearby villages and Bethlehem. The immediate risk is copycat attempts and escalation-by-rumor inside the Gush Etzion corridor.
- **Nur a-Shams demolitions expand** — Central Command ordered demolitions of structures in Nur a-Shams, citing operational necessity after continued discovery of weapons and newly planted explosive devices.

REGIONAL AXIS (IRAN, HOUTHIS, MILITIAS)

- **Iran moves missiles deeper east** — A senior Western diplomat in Tehran said missile sites may be relocated farther into eastern Iran to complicate Israeli/U.S. strike reach. In a surprise to no one, this implies Iran is designing survivability after the last round—not de-escalating.
- **Iran “knowledge remains” messaging** — Iran’s FM says facilities suffered heavy damage but technology remains, urging a return to diplomacy. That’s a warning that rebuilding is a question of time, not capability.
- **Iraq preemptive messaging** — Iraq’s foreign minister warned “Israeli threats” are ongoing, while Iraq reportedly dismissed officials after a decision to freeze funds linked to Hezbollah and the Houthis surfaced.

DIPLOMATIC & LEGAL

- **ISF numbers inflate; mandate doesn’t** — Trump says 59 countries want in on the International Stabilization Force, while Italy and Indonesia reportedly agree to send forces but will avoid confronting Hamas. The near-term risk is a force that constrains Israel’s freedom of action while leaving Hamas’s guns untouched.
- **Qatar F-35 push returns** — Qatar has formally renewed a request to buy F-35s, and Israel is preparing a package (additional squadrons and munitions) to preserve qualitative edge. Air dominance is Israel’s strategic insurance policy—and Washington is considering making some money by eroding that edge in favor of jihadis. Great choices there.
- **Pakistan troop pressure** — Washington is pressing Pakistan to join the Gaza force, but Islamabad is already signaling it won’t disarm Hamas. If Pakistan commits, domestic blowback risk rises and the ISF becomes a political hostage before it becomes a security tool.
- **U.S. entry restrictions expand** — The U.S. expands entry bans to additional countries and applies restrictions to Palestinian Authority travel documents. This will reverberate across regional mobility while doing little to touch organized terror networks.

HOME FRONT & POLITICS

- **CyberDome signals hidden pressure** — Israel–U.S. cyber forces completed CyberDome, with the IDF cyber chief warning that publicly known events understate the threat and that attempted disruptions will increase. Cyber pressure is the quiet front that can hit national systems without warning—especially if kinetic fronts pause.

Security doesn’t pause because someone announced a process. What shifted is where the contest is fought: not just with strikes and raids, but with mandates, arms packages, courtrooms, and “stabilization” branding.

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ABOUT MITZPE INSTITUTE

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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