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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

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Israel tightens enforcement while Iran rehearses saturation and the West debates 'process' like it stops missiles.

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THE BOTTOM LINE This is how propaganda becomes permission and permission becomes violence: you dignify the moral logic of jihad, then act shocked when jihadists take you literally. The most corrosive part is not the one speaker. It is the signal to audiences and institutions: praising bin Laden can be framed as “anti-imperial critique,” and any scrutiny can be reframed as “criminalizing communities.” That inversion is an accelerant. It teaches the next aspiring attacker that the culture will debate his “motives” longer than it will defend his targets.

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Flash Brief

- **Northern Front:** IDF strikes Hezbollah operatives and rebuild activity as Naqoura talks drift into economics.
- **Iran:** IRGC runs multi-region missile exercises as Israel flags miscalculation and preemption risk.
- **Iraq Corridor:** Iranian intelligence delegation meets Baghdad officials as proxy discipline pressure tightens.
- **Gaza:** IDF advances and strikes continue as Hamas delays the last return and rebuilds under civilian cover.
- **Judea & Samaria:** Sovereignty moves accelerate in northern Samaria as terror incidents keep flashing.
- **Europe:** Jewish life hardens into security perimeters as harassment incidents spread.
- **Home Front:** Inquiry legislation advances and Galei Tzahal shutdown begins.

THE enemy trades time for rebuild, and friendly capitals trade outcomes for meetings. Israel's advantage stays the same—speed, clarity, and refusal to let “process” substitute for control. What follows breaks down where that leverage is compounding—and where constraints are being manufactured around it.

The War Today

North Becomes An Iran Missile Drill With Lebanese Cover

Israel kept deleting Hezbollah's rebuild attempt in real time: strikes hit operatives in southern Lebanon (including Sidon) and eliminated a figure tied directly to rehabilitating infrastructure, after additional strikes in Yater and a week of 91st Division contact that removed multiple operatives. Lebanese reporting claims one drone strike also killed a Lebanese Army soldier and two others—whether true, mistaken, or opportunistically framed, it's the exact kind of “civilian harm” hook Washington uses to tighten the leash. Meanwhile, Naqoura's “civilian talks” drifted toward border economic-zone language, with France reportedly sidelined and the U.S. pressing Israel on strike effects while Lebanon prioritizes returns and Israel prioritizes buffer logic; Italy, for its part, is already signaling it wants to keep troops south of the Litani after UNIFIL's planned exit—because everyone understands the vacuum is coming, they just want Israel to pay for it quietly. Behind the Lebanese theater sits the actual engine: Tehran is running large-scale IRGC exercises across multiple regions with ballistic launches and air activity, explicitly building missile-saturation capacity meant to stress Israel's interception endurance; Israeli leadership warned Washington this drill profile could be pre-attack preparation, and senior channels are already talking in “miscalculation” terms—the classic prelude to someone “preempting” because they assume the other

side is about to move. Add reported Iranian intelligence travel to Baghdad and you get the same architecture we've been tracking: Lebanon as the fuse, Iraq as the corridor, Iran as the launcher.

ASSESSMENT

The north is no longer a Hezbollah problem. It's an Iranian timing problem wearing a Lebanese uniform so it can file press releases about "sovereignty." Naqoura is useful only if it produces arms seizures, not sentences—economic zones don't stop rockets, they just give diplomats something to announce while Hezbollah relocates inventory one village over. The more Tehran believes missiles are its best penetration tool, the more it will try to create a "first wave" big enough to exhaust Israeli defense and political patience at once. That makes accidental escalation more likely, not less—because both sides start reading drills as launch preparation and start designing "short-notice" options.

Hamas Hoards Control, Delays Remains, And Tests The Yellow Line

In Gaza, the tactical picture stays blunt: reported overnight advances in Jabaliya along multiple axes, additional strikes in eastern Rafah/Khan Yunis/Maghazi, and continued contact rules around the Yellow Line that keep turning hostile movement into immediate consequences. Hamas is responding the way an organization responds when it wants time but can't afford open fight: tighten internal control, reassert governance above ground, and keep the hostage return front-and-center as leverage. On Ran Gvili, ז"ל, specifically, Israeli officials say Hamas is refusing to interrogate Islamic Jihad figures Israel identified as holding key burial-site information—while Israel previously avoided killing that small group specifically to preserve the chance of recovering the location. That is not "difficulty." It's policy. Hamas chooses delay because delay is the only weapon it can still reliably fire. Reservists on the line describe seeing Hamas activity deeper inside the Strip—planting, rebuilding, moving in vests—and being restricted to reporting unless higher approvals come through, with a growing belief that "U.S. approval" now shadows virtually every meaningful step.

ASSESSMENT

Israel's enforcement doctrine is working tactically and being negotiated away operationally. That's the trap. You win the micro-contact—one more breacher removed, one more tunnel node neutralized—then you lose the macro-permission because somebody upstream wants Phase II optics and "stability" branding. Hamas understands this better than half the people who report on it. Holding Ran Gvili's remains hostage while refusing to interrogate the people who know where they are is the most honest signal Hamas can send. It will not behave like a governing entity. It will behave like a cartel with a flag. And the reservist complaints describe the real failure mode of ceasefire-era warfare: not "we stopped fighting," but "we outsourced initiative." If the rule-set becomes "Israel can defend itself, pending approval," then the only actor with freedom of action is the enemy—because Hamas doesn't submit forms before it rebuilds.

Inside Israel

Inquiry Architecture Becomes A Power Fight Over “Who Defines Failure”

The government advanced legislation for an inquiry committee with a preliminary vote expected midweek, while Netanyahu framed the mandate as going back as far as Oslo or the 2005 disengagement and announced a “special state commission” model that splits composition between coalition and opposition and adds experts with bereaved families as observers. Polling data now shows the public does not want a one-man judicial appointment model: only about one-fifth support Supreme Court President Yitzhak Amit appointing the commission alone. While the largest support clusters favor either a coalition–opposition parity model or a joint appointment by Amit and Justice Noam Sohlberg—an explicit demand for balance mechanisms, not further deliberations from the legal priesthood. At the same time, the information layer turned radioactive: the indicted former aide Eli Feldstein publicly claimed Netanyahu supported using classified material to shape public opinion, described internal conversations about “shutting down” an investigation into the leak, and the wider “Qatargate” allegations escalated into political accusations of a severe breach—Gantz demanded the Prime Minister explain what he knew and hand over information “tomorrow,” while opposition figures weaponized the word “treason” as a political charge even as the underlying claims remain dubious at best. Add in two structural moves that reshape the state’s communications environment: the government unanimously approved closing Galei Tzahal on a fixed shutdown timetable with immediate recruitment freezes and soldier reassignment priorities, and the Knesset extended the authority to restrict foreign channels deemed harmful to state security through 2027, including office closures and website blocks with cabinet-level approvals.

ASSESSMENT

Israel is attempting to build an accountability mechanism while simultaneously litigating legitimacy itself. That is a terrible combination. You can survive mistakes, but you cannot survive a public that concludes the process exists to manage blame rather than produce truth. The inquiry fight is not really about procedure—it’s about trust under fire. The coalition wants to prevent a self-selecting legal class from owning “independence” and then handing down verdicts as political fate; the far-left want insulation from politicians they don’t trust. Both instincts exist for a reason. The danger is that the system’s answer becomes “everyone appoints everyone,” which sounds balanced until it becomes a commission engineered to go deep enough in history to dilute responsibility and slow enough in pace to miss elections. Layer Feldstein/Qatargate on top and you get a governance disease. Security-adjacent messaging treated as a tool of factional survival. A war cabinet does not get to behave like a campaign shop and still demand the public’s patience. If you want the structural root of this—constitutional vacuum, inquiry legitimacy, veto-point warfare—this is straight out of The Unfinished State.

Sovereignty Moves From Slogan To Bulldozer In Northern Samaria

The government greenlit the return of Israeli civilian presence to Sa-Nur—evacuated in the 2005 disengagement—setting a timeline for a core group of families to begin moving in as early as Purim, alongside infrastructure and force posture changes: a bypass road budgeted at roughly 20 million shekels,

a Menashe Brigade HQ relocation, and a planned platoon positioned by mid-January 2026 to stabilize the area. Smotrich used the moment to push the doctrine explicitly: no Gaza reconstruction without full demilitarization, no Palestinian Authority role in Gaza, and a demand to dismantle the PA and apply Israeli sovereignty in Judea and Samaria so that coastal-line cities do not become Gaza-envelope towns. On the ground, the friction signature matched the politics: near Route 437 in the Anatot area, stone-throwing injured Jewish shepherds and one fired back, with three Arab attackers reported wounded and police opening an investigation. In parallel, in the Negev a majority of Bedouins reported deep dissatisfaction with clan-driven governance, weak service delivery, and collapsing personal security—and most preferred outside, state-appointed leadership over elected local heads, a flashing red sign that “local governance” has become synonymous with capture rather than services.

ASSESSMENT

The Sa-Nur move is a strategic ridge decision paired with force design and road logic—exactly how sovereignty actually happens: facts, access, and security architecture. Critics will scream “provocation.” The more relevant question is whether Israel has learned that indefensible space invites organization, and organized enemies eventually test it. But none of this survives without governance capacity. The Anatot incident is the small, ugly reminder that the periphery can still be a daily contact zone. Meanwhile, the Negev survey reads like a quiet emergency: when residents beg for state-appointed leadership, they are not praising bureaucracy—they are admitting local structures have failed and fear has replaced politics. If you want to understand the terminology warfare, ridge logic, Oslo’s residue, and the sovereignty arguments that shape these moves, this is in Judea’s Settlers.

Israel and the World

Concrete Barriers Replace Citizenship As States Stall On Enforcement

Across Western Europe, the pattern is consolidating into a single operational truth: Jewish life functions only with hard security and soft apologies. In Germany, the country’s senior Jewish communal leader described Jewish existence as confined behind armed guards and concrete, warning that “habituation” to antisemitism has reached an intolerable level. In Britain, polling of thousands of Jews shows near-total demand for an independent investigation into perceived institutional bias in the state broadcaster’s coverage of Jewish-interest issues, with most respondents also reporting collapsing faith in prosecution and enforcement after reporting hate crimes. Belgium has non-Jews angry as regular “pro-Palestine” demonstrations now overlap Christmas markets with smoke grenades, drums, and intimidation theater near transit nodes and Jewish quarters—an obvious choice of terrain masquerading as “activism.” France supplies an unfortunate (though clear) example: two Jewish boys at a major airport were harassed, called “pig,” ordered to “dance,” threatened over their kippot, and physically bullied over a game controller—classic domination behavior dressed in “free Palestine” language.

Layer in the report of an Israeli man beaten until he was unconscious (in Cyprus) after being overheard speaking Hebrew, and you get a continental threat posture where language exposure becomes target selection, and the state response remains reactive and fragmented.

ASSESSMENT

Europe has a two-tier reality—and it's not just UK policing. Jews receive concrete barriers and condolences, while the ecosystems that produce harassment receive process, slogans, and endless "context." That is governance failure with a holiday schedule. Public spaces have normalized intimidation near Jewish neighborhoods and facilities, and every event becomes a policing operation. Every Jewish family becomes an operational planning problem. The immediate risk is copycat acceleration: perpetrators learn that visible Jews are low-cost targets and that authorities prefer paperwork to consequences. The deeper risk is civic surrender—citizenship becomes conditional on discretion.

Jihad Apologia Goes Mainstream Under "Activism" Branding

A British pro-Palestinian activist publicly praised Osama bin Laden's "Letter to America" as a "voice of freedom," leaning on the same Gen-Z TikTok rehabilitation wave that turned mass-murder justification into pseudo-political literacy. These remarks landed as news of the Sydney Hanukkah terror massacre was emerging, and the speaker's later "condemnation" posture focused on moralizing about Israel rather than confronting the ideological wiring that produces Jews-as-targets. When a public figure can launder bin Laden as "understandable" and still occupy respectable civil-society space, the West is not merely tolerating extremism—it has seemingly fully embraced it regardless of what ineffectual optics moves mealy mouthed politicians may make. Meanwhile, indictments and investigative details out of Australia describe planning, weapons training, reconnaissance, attempted IED use, and propaganda content tied to the Sydney attackers—exactly the kind of operational pathway that thrives when ideology gets treated as "speech community" instead of threat ecosystem.

ASSESSMENT

This is how propaganda becomes permission and permission becomes violence: you dignify the moral logic of jihad, then act shocked when jihadists take you literally. The most corrosive part is not the one speaker. It is the signal to audiences and institutions: praising bin Laden can be framed as "anti-imperial critique," and any scrutiny can be reframed as "criminalizing communities." That inversion is an accelerant. It teaches the next aspiring attacker that the culture will debate his "motives" longer than it will defend his targets.

Briefly Noted

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- **Israel National News:** A rights-monitoring report says Saudi Arabia executed 347 people in 2024, with roughly two-thirds for drug offenses and

many foreign nationals. The “moderation” brand keeps cashing checks while the regime signals impunity through blood—useful leverage for Riyadh, and a reminder that values talk is usually just export packaging.

- **Jerusalem Post:** An Israeli former senior officer argues Turkey has shifted from hostile rhetoric to a forming strategic front, including maritime and Syria-airspace pressure scenarios. Ankara’s ambition is no longer background noise; it’s a regional force that can tax Israel’s freedom of action and should be priced into every Cyprus/Greece axis move.

Culture, Religion & Society

- **Jerusalem Post:** Footage from Paris Charles de Gaulle shows a man harassing Jewish children, calling them “pig,” ordering them to dance, and threatening their kipput in the name of “free Palestine.”
- **Israel National News:** The ADL says at least 20% of New York City mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani’s transition appointees have histories of antisemitic/anti-Israel rhetoric or extremist ties, prompting a rapid resignation and “vetting reform” talk.
- **Jerusalem Post:** A TAMID alumni study found sustained Israel connection among participants years after graduation, including professional collaboration and continued engagement. Career competence beats campus theatrics—when Israel is experienced as capability, it’s harder to reduce to hashtags.
- **Times of Israel:** Judea Pearl released a new collection arguing “Zionophobia” has gone mainstream and functions as a denial of Jewish self-determination, especially on campuses.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Sidon Strikes Test LAF Cover** — IDF strikes hit Hezbollah operatives in Sidon and Yater, including figures tied to infrastructure rehabilitation, while Lebanese media claim an LAF casualty. This is exactly the civilian-uniform ambiguity Hezbollah uses to invite diplomatic pressure and constrain Israel mid-enforcement. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Italy Eyes Post-UNIFIL South** — Rome signaled interest in keeping troops south of the Litani after UNIFIL’s 2027 withdrawal. Everyone sees the vacuum coming; the fight is over who inherits it without owning disarmament.
- **SAM-7 Cache Near Albukamal** — Syrian internal security seized man-portable air-defense missiles near the Iraq border. That corridor remains live, and shoulder-fired air denial is the cheapest way to complicate Israeli freedom of action. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Jabaliya Axes Advance** — Gazan reporting claims overnight IDF movement along three axes in Jabaliya with Yellow Line barriers pushed west and tunnel clearance expanding. This tightens denial corridors and invites renewed lawfare timed to Phase II optics.
- **Rafah–Khan Yunis Fire Continues** — Air and helicopter strikes reported in eastern Rafah, Khan Yunis, and Maghazi alongside tank fire toward Khan Yunis. The tempo signals enforcement continuity, not drawdown, despite ceasefire theater.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **IRGC Missile Drills Compress Timelines** — Iran ran large-scale, multi-region ballistic missile exercises while signaling a shift toward saturation doctrine over drones. Israel warned Washington this could be pre-attack preparation; miscalculation risk is peaking. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Iran Intel Delegation in Baghdad** — A senior Iranian intelligence team arrived in Iraq amid proxy disarmament talk and strike warnings. Baghdad is the corridor, not the decision-maker.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **Trump–Netanyahu Agenda Hardens** — Netanyahu says Gaza Phase II, Hezbollah, and Iran top his meeting with Trump, while U.S. voices warn against large-scale Iran strikes. Sequencing decisions, not statements, will follow. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Turkey–Damascus Coordination** — Ankara sent senior officials to Damascus, citing SDF–Israel coordination as an obstacle. Turkey is positioning Syria as a pressure lane against Israel’s northern freedom of action.

Home Front & Politics

- **Galei Tzahal Shutdown Starts** — The government ordered immediate steps to close the ideologically captured Army Radio, freezing recruitment and reassigning soldiers to combat roles ahead of a March shutdown.
- **Inquiry Bill Moves Midweek** — The coalition advanced the inquiry committee bill toward a preliminary vote as rhetoric around “Qatargate” hardens. Process fights are about to collide with operational timelines.

Iran is building a saturation theory of victory, Hezbollah is hiding behind state uniforms, Hamas is still monstrously treating hostage remains like a negotiating instrument, and Europe is discovering—*again*—that appeasement is just delayed policing after the bloodshed. The next moves turn on three variables: whether Tehran’s drill posture stays signaling or becomes launch cover, whether Lebanon’s “civilian track” becomes a leash on Israeli enforcement, and whether Gaza’s line holds without being litigated in Washington. Israel should keep doing what works: delete rebuild, price delay, and treat “frameworks” as noise until someone shows up with authority and a wrench.

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

Send this to the person outsourcing judgment to headlines and waking up confused every morning.

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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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