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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

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Ceasefire language expands as enforcement gets tested—by IEDs, airspace, and paperwork.

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THE BOTTOM LINE Western governments keep building an after-action report *after* the attempted abduction, after the terror plot, after the intimidation marches. That is not governance; it's condolence management. When you place an ISIS-linked plotter on bail and then announce "no known threats," you are not calming the public—you are telling them to stop noticing. Jewish communities don't need reassurance; they need consequences. Israel should treat this as a diaspora deterrence front: push allies toward common sense bail reform, protest enforcement that distinguishes speech from incitement, and real disruption of extremist pipelines—especially where foreign money launders ideology into institutions.

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MERRY Christmas to those who celebrate it, and may it be peaceful and safe.

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Hamas is still foolishly considering the Yellow Line as a suggestion. Hezbollah is rebuilding under Lebanese-state cover. Foreign capitals keep trying to swap disarmament for “formats.”

The pressure is migrating from battlefield mechanics to sequencing fights—who moves first, who verifies, who pretends. Here’s the situation in ninety seconds.

Flash Brief

- **Gaza:** Hamas breaches the Yellow Line and triggers strikes, then reintroduces IED violence in Rafah. *See The War Today.*
- **Northern Front:** IDF expands strike geometry into Lebanon’s south and Beqaa as Hezbollah rebuild space narrows. *See The War Today.*
- **Iran:** IRGC drills run near Tehran as Israel signals monitoring and keeps preemption logic on the table. *See Developments to Watch.*
- **Diplomacy:** The Bibi-Trump meeting becomes a sequencing fight on Gaza, Turkey, Iran, and Lebanon enforcement. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Lawfare:** Belgium joins the ICJ case as UN bureaucracy keeps manufacturing “authority” through paperwork volume. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Home Front:** Inquiry and Qatargate pressure rise as the draft law and coalition stability move toward a forced decision. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Diaspora:** Post-Bondi enforcement hardens unevenly as Western systems relearn consequences after the bloodshed. *See Israel and the World.*

BELow: how enforcement, diplomacy, and domestic legitimacy collide into near-term decision pressure.

Armed actors test boundaries, states hide behind process, and “international mechanisms” try to tax Israel’s freedom of action without owning the job. The next section moves from signals to structure—starting with the battlefield where the rules are still real.

The War Today

Hamas Reasserts Rule, Tests The Yellow Line

Gaza enforcement held while Hamas tested the edges—and then crossed them. Over the past 48 hours, Hamas operatives breached the Yellow Line repeatedly, triggering immediate airstrikes, culminating in a hostile IED attack against a Namer APC in Rafah’s Jenina neighborhood that lightly wounded a Golani officer. Hamas first blamed Israel, then claimed unexploded ordnance—standard evasion after a deliberate violation. Parallel pressure hit Hamas’s recovery

engine: Israel confirmed the earlier elimination of a senior finance operative responsible for moving tens of millions of dollars into the military wing, even as officials warned Hamas is funneling aid, taxes, and overseas funds to reassert governance over roughly half the Strip it still controls. On the political front, Hamas published a new “Our Narrative” document laundering October 7 into ideology, denying atrocities, and restating its red lines—full Israeli withdrawal, reconstruction, and continued armed “resistance” under Palestinian-only governance. Meanwhile, Ankara hosted Hamas leadership and pushed Phase II, positioning itself as the only willing participant in a “day after” force—precisely as Israel signaled it will oppose any Turkish role and tie next steps to demilitarization and hostage return. On the ground, IDF activity continued along the Yellow Line with targeted strikes in Gaza City’s east, Khan Yunis, and Rafah, plus preparations to clear unexploded ordnance and demolish hostile infrastructure near the boundary.

ASSESSMENT

Hamas is speaking in three channels—violence, budgets, and manifestos—and all say the same thing: no disarmament, no exit from governance, and Phase II as an Israeli withdrawal mechanism. The IED matters less for the injury (thank G-d it was light) than for the precedent: Hamas is probing whether it can reintroduce violence under ceasefire cover while harvesting diplomatic pressure on Israel to “advance the process.” The finance strike targets the recovery engine, not just gunmen. Hamas’s governance comeback depends on cash disguised as civil administration. Treat any “international force” without seizure authority as theater, because it is. Turkey’s mediation bid is not neutral facilitation. It imports a Hamas patron into enforcement and calls it stability. This is doctrine versus optics—squarely within The Jihadist Continuum.

Lebanon’s Quiet Rebuild Meets Expanding Strike Geometry

Israel widened its strike envelope across Lebanon, hitting launch sites and infrastructure in the south and executing targeted UAV strikes deeper inland, including the eastern Beqaa, while Lebanese officials denied affiliation of a killed soldier—only for Hezbollah to confirm it. Israeli assessments rate Iran as the most dangerous front but Lebanon as more likely to escalate quickly. Air activity over Lebanese territorial waters opposite Beirut underscored mapping for the next round. Concurrently, Hezbollah chose restraint—not passivity—to buy time for rearmament with Iranian backing, betting it can recover faster than Beirut can impose sovereignty. Economic realities reinforce the problem: Hezbollah funding flows dwarf Western support to Lebanese institutions, while the army’s low wages hollow out deployable manpower. Against this backdrop, Israeli leaders approved senior IDF appointments, fielded new artillery systems to boost long-war firepower, and signaled readiness for saturation scenarios even as diplomacy keeps searching for “formats” that avoid arms seizures.

ASSESSMENT

Lebanon is negotiating with physics. Disarmament “desire” does not seize launchers. Speeches do not dismantle inventories. Hezbollah’s quiet is rebuild time, and Israel’s strikes are doing what diplomacy refuses to do: making rebuild assets perishable. The risk is external constraint—tightening Israel’s leash in the name of “state stability,” which in practice means letting Hezbollah reconstitute under a flag. When the militia uses the state as armor, Israel either punctures the armor or accepts the militia. The trend line favors continued deletion of rebuild pathways until either Beirut chooses sovereignty or escalation makes the choice for it.

Inside Israel

Hostage Doctrine Moves From Ad Hoc To Statute

Israel is trying to amputate a recurring strategic weakness: hostage-taking as a profitable terror tactic. A Knesset emergency forum launched a bill to codify the long-ignored Shamgar Committee recommendations—tightening negotiating principles, limiting extortion space, and restoring a standardized national posture after two years in which over 250 Israelis were held and the country learned (again) that “flexibility” becomes a weapon in the enemy’s hands. Ministers and MKs argued the current cycle teaches every terror organization the same lesson: kidnap Jews and the state will eventually bargain under pressure. With only one fallen soldier still held and negotiations still shaping battlefield sequencing, lawmakers are explicitly aiming to legislate policy when the leverage window closes—so the next round is harder to trigger. This sits alongside continuing internal-security operations in Judea and Samaria, with overnight arrests of suspects planning attacks and stone-throwers detained and transferred for questioning, reinforcing that Israel’s internal front is not a backdrop—it’s the environment hostage policy must serve.

ASSESSMENT

Hamas did not invent kidnapping—though it seems to have industrialized the profit margin. If Israel wants to remove hostage-taking from the enemy’s playbook, it needs more than resolve in the moment. It needs law that prevents improvisation from becoming precedent. The only moral argument that matters here is future victims: every deal that feels “necessary” in the present becomes the recruitment brochure for the next abduction cell. Security services have already thwarted several kidnapping instances in the last week or so within Judea and Samaria. This isn’t a problem just for the next major attack. Put differently: a nation that turns ransom into routine should not be surprised when the enemy schedules kidnappings like quarterly earnings calls.

Inquiry Politics, Qatargate, And Courtroom Friction Converge

Protests hit ministers’ homes ahead of the first Knesset vote on the government’s October 7 probe framework, with the far-left warning the coalition is designing an inquiry that manages blame rather than produces accountability. The proposed model can devolve into a coalition-appointed panel if the opposition boycotts—precisely the credibility trap everyone can see

from space. In parallel, the prime minister's trial moved through another testimony day with a public courtroom clash, judicial warnings about attorney conduct, and scheduling distortions tied to travel—reminding the public that national leadership time is split between governance and a ideologically captured and hostile judiciary. And then Qatargate pushed into the coalition: a sitting minister publicly backed a full investigation into allegations that senior aides acted to benefit Qatar while employed at the center of Israeli decision-making, with opposition figures calling for expanded scrutiny of senior staff.

ASSESSMENT

The danger is not that the government gets investigated; the danger is that the public concludes the process is engineered—either by politicians protecting themselves or by institutions using procedure as a veto tool. Once that belief hardens, every future decision—draft law, Gaza sequencing, Lebanon escalation—pays a trust tax. Qatargate is especially corrosive because it touches the hostage and perception domain. If aides were freelancing foreign interests while Israel negotiated for lives, it is not “optics.” Meanwhile, courtroom drama is not theater; it’s friction that bleeds authority and time. This is the operational version of the constitutional fault line—Basic Laws without a constitution, veto points without brakes—mapped in The Unfinished State.

Draft Deadlock, Civil Marriage Flashpoint, Election Math, And Autarky Bets Coalition stability is degrading through three linked pressure points: manpower, identity, and timing. The Haredi draft law remains deadlocked, with reports that the prime minister quietly ordered preparations for an early election scenario (potentially June) if the draft law or budget collapses—while publicly insisting the government will complete its term. Ultra-Orthodox parties escalated their threats after the Knesset speaker backed an opposition civil-marriage bill—framing it as a breach of status-quo commitments and another sign the coalition's internal bargain is unraveling. At the same time, civil-military friction eased tactically when the defense minister approved senior Air Force and Navy appointments after internal reviews tied to October 7, but the episode itself exposed how personnel decisions can get politicized mid-war. Overlay the strategic-industrial move: the government approved a decade-scale allocation—NIS 350 billion—to build a more independent Israeli munitions industry to reduce reliance even on allies, a direct response to restrictions and embargo-threat politics. And in the social layer, the public is still stitching itself back together: a former hostage's benefit concert sold out within hours, a small but telling signal of civic mobilization after captivity.

ASSESSMENT

This is the recipe for forced elections, whether anyone “wants” them or not. Once coalition trust breaks, every vote becomes, in essence, a hostage negotiation. The arms-industry autarky bet is the only strategic move, but factories cannot substitute for manpower and cohesion. Munitions don't vote, and they don't show up for reserve duty. If the coalition wants to project strength while confronting Iran timelines and a hostile “Phase II” push, it needs one thing above all: a credible service framework and a government that looks like it expects to still be governing next month.

Israel and the World

Mar-a-Lago Sequencing Becomes Regional Architecture

Israel is walking into the Trump meeting with one goal: turn “process” into enforceable sequencing across Gaza, Iran, Lebanon, and Syria. The agenda: Iran’s ballistic rebuild and proxy reconstitution; Gaza Phase II conditioned on actual disarmament and the return of the last fallen hostage; and a hard Israeli veto on Turkish participation in any Gaza stabilization force—while Ankara escalates rhetoric and tries to re-enter the enforcement lane as a patron of Hamas. Lebanon stays on the escalation edge as enforcement expands beyond the south: overnight strikes eliminated Hezbollah operatives in southern Lebanon, and a separate strike hit a vehicle in the Beqaa near the Syrian border after UAV activity was reported in the area. Syria is now being discussed as a security arrangement file with Russian mediation and reported U.S. approval—an odd but logical symptom of a region where “the international community” mostly issues statements while actual actors move borders, corridors, and airspace. Meanwhile, the U.S. is still feeding Israel’s infantry continuity through Foreign Military Sales—fresh procurement of M4A1 carbines with suppressors and flash hiders—while Israel simultaneously signals a long-term pivot toward local production independence. The message to Washington is not subtle: Israel will keep fighting its own wars, but it will not accept frameworks that import hostile patrons into Gaza or let Iran rebuild under diplomatic cover.

ASSESSMENT

The meeting decides sequencing: who disarms whom, who verifies, and who gets to call a bluff. Turkey wants a seat because it wants leverage. Qatar wants relevance because it wants immunity. Russia wants mediation because it wants a return ticket into the region’s decision rooms. Israel’s job is to keep a simple rule: no enforcement authority, no role. The U.S. can insist on speed. Israel must insist on outcomes. If Washington pushes a Gaza transition that includes Turkey and skips disarmament, it is not a plan—it’s a reload cycle with better branding.

UN Paperwork, ICJ Drama, And The Settlement Condemnation Loop

Israel’s UN mission is openly calling out an estimated ~\$100 million-a-year ecosystem of committees, rapporteurs, and permanent “Palestine” mechanisms that churn out supposedly authoritative material that migrates into NGOs, press coverage, parliamentary debates, and ultimately court filings. Belgium’s move into the ICJ genocide case sits inside that environment. A coalition of Western states condemned Israel’s approval of new communities in Judea and Samaria—demanding reversal and incorrectly citing international law. Israel’s response rejected the “moral” posture as discriminatory and noted the silence on illegal Palestinian Authority construction in Area C. On the U.S. campus front, a high-profile UN special rapporteur figure appears to have been removed from an affiliated scholar role after sustained

scrutiny—small proof that reputational immunity can be punctured when institutions feel heat. And the PA's own credibility front keeps flashing: Abbas praised "loyalty" to prisoners and "martyrs" while Israel argues Ramallah is disguising continuation of terror payments through other channels even after purported reforms—exactly the kind of ambiguity donors pretend to audit until it becomes politically expensive. If you're still curious about the pay-for-slay payments? They're still happening. I was sitting in a Palestinian's home yesterday afternoon when they confirmed this. It doesn't matter if it goes through PA accounts or directed by them through a terror NGO. Those are your tax dollars at work paying for jihad against Jews.

ASSESSMENT

Israel keeps arguing facts while its adversaries mass-produce footnotes. A UN report does not need to be true; it only needs to be cited. Once it's cited, it becomes "consensus," and once it becomes consensus, it becomes a weapon. The settlement condemnation cycle works the same way: maximal scrutiny of Jews building homes, minimal scrutiny of PA illegality and terror-incitement economics. Donors fund this ecosystem, then act shocked when it produces outcomes. It is not "bias." It's an industry.

Diaspora at Risk with "Catch And Release" for Jew-hating terrorists

Diaspora Jewish security continues shifting from "community affairs" to national-security failure. In Canada, an ISIS-linked kidnapping/rape/hostage plot against Jews and women is colliding with bail decisions that have left one charged suspect back in the community, while another had been cycling through probation and release before terrorism charges landed—exactly the "catch and release" pattern that teaches extremists they can probe, fail, and try again. Local Jewish organizations publicly rejected reassurance language about "no known threats," pointing to weekly intimidation-style marches in Jewish neighborhoods and the predictable chants that keep getting treated as "political speech" until they become operational signaling.

ASSESSMENT

Western governments keep building an after-action report after the attempted abduction, after the terror plot, after the intimidation marches. That is not governance; it's condolence management. When you place an ISIS-linked plotter on bail and then announce "no known threats," you are not calming the public—you are telling them to stop noticing. Jewish communities don't need reassurance; they need consequences. Israel should treat this as a diaspora deterrence front: push allies toward common sense bail reform, protest enforcement that distinguishes speech from incitement, and real disruption of extremist pipelines—especially where foreign money launders ideology into institutions.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- *Jerusalem Post*: Jordan carried out airstrikes near Sweida after intercepting arms-and-drug smugglers moving off Syrian territory toward the border.

Syria's "new order" is still leaking captagon and weapons, and Amman is treating smuggling as a cross-border military problem, not a customs issue.

- *Jerusalem Post*: Libya's GNU army chief Lt.-Gen. Mohammed al-Haddad died in a plane crash after departing Ankara, along with senior aides and crew. Turkey's Libya file keeps producing sudden leadership shocks, and every "unity" mechanism in a fractured militia-state now gets one more excuse to stall.
- *Israel National News*: A car displaying a "Happy Hanukkah" sign was torched in Melbourne's Jewish suburb St Kilda East as police investigate a "suspicious fire." Australia's post-Bondi "never again" phase is already stuck in the familiar Western loop: more police statements, more Jewish targets, and near-zero consequences.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- *Jewish Insider*: Kuwait revoked the citizenship of prominent Muslim Brotherhood-linked cleric Tareq Al-Suwaidean by emir decree, without publicly citing which legal provision triggered it. Kuwait is signaling it doesn't want to be the Gulf's soft underbelly as pressure on Brotherhood networks rises.
- *Jerusalem Post*: Jordan struck near Sweida after intercepting smugglers; Syria's own messaging framed it as a security red line against "terror remnants."

Domestic & Law

- *JNS*: The Palestinian Authority reportedly promoted two convicted terrorists freed in the hostage deal, granting senior ranks and the attached salaries. Ramallah keeps rebranding pay-for-slay as "welfare" and "state employment," because incentivizing terror is just their payroll.

Culture, Religion & Society

- *Jerusalem Post*: An American Muslim Zionist said he was detained at Al-Aqsa after refusing to remove a yellow hostage pin, and was escorted out for "provocation." Even human sympathy for kidnapped Jews is treated as a punishable offense in some Arab-run spaces—proof the problem is ideology, not "policy disagreements."
- *Times of Israel*: A Brooklyn-based firm bought roughly 200 luxury apartments in two Jerusalem towers (reportedly up to ~NIS 1 billion) to market primarily to New York-area Syrian Jews and related diaspora circles. Diaspora insecurity is turning into capital flight and semi-aliyah infrastructure—and Jerusalem's "ghost apartment" problem just got a high-end reinforcement.
- *Israel National News*: A mob attacked Jews en route to a Hanukkah lighting near Istanbul's Neve Shalom Synagogue amid a year of escalating anti-Israel agitation and official incitement. Erdoğan's Turkey is waging ideological war abroad, and acting surprised when the Jews at home start paying the bill.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Strike Geometry Pushes East** — IDF UAV strikes hit targets in southern Lebanon and the Beqaa, including vehicle eliminations near the Syrian border.
- **Nachshon Over Beirut Waters** — Israeli ISR aircraft flew over Lebanese territorial waters opposite Beirut for the first time since the war began. This is mapping for next-round options. Hezbollah now has to decide whether to swallow it or answer it.
- **Russia-Syria Defense Sync** — Moscow hosted Syria's foreign and defense ministers to discuss military modernization and defense-industry cooperation. Russian sponsorship hardens Damascus's posture and complicates Israel's freedom of action north of Hermon if lanes aren't clarified soon.
- **Hermon Hold Gets Re-Justified** — Alma Center reiterated the strategic necessity of holding Mount Hermon's peak to disrupt Hezbollah smuggling and preserve depth amid Syrian instability. Expect this to be litigated diplomatically as Israel converts facts on the ground into permanence.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Rafah IED Triggers Response Clock** — A hostile IED wounded a Golani officer during clearance operations in Rafah, with Israel formally concluding it was an attack. Hamas's denial choreography buys it nothing; a measured Israeli response is now baked in. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Yellow Barrels Signal Westward Shift** — IDF drones placed demolition charges near Salah al-Din Road in Tuffah, prompting reports of a westward push of the Yellow Line. This tightens denial corridors and invites near-term lawfare timed to Phase II pressure.
- **Hamas Tightens Internal Security** — Hamas ordered operatives to restrict movement and heighten personal security after strikes and finance hits. The terror cartel is bracing for further attrition while trying to keep governance intact.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **IRGC Drills Break the Quiet** — Tehran warned residents of explosions tied to IRGC exercises near the capital. Exercises at this scale shorten miscalculation windows by design. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Axis Money Keeps Flowing** — Israel confirmed tens of millions moved into Hamas's military wing over the past year even under international pressure. Cash remains the Axis's rebuild lubricant; interdiction will keep expanding beyond Gaza.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **Turkey's Gaza Bid Hits Red Line** — Ankara is pitching itself as the sole willing “day after” actor while Israel prepares to veto Turkish participation with Washington.
- **Belgium Joins ICJ Case** — Brussels formally joined South Africa's genocide filing, adding momentum to lawfare just as Gaza enforcement tightens. Expect coordinated copycat moves framed as “procedural” to land within days.

Home Front & Politics

- **Inquiry Bill Clears First Hurdle** — The October 7 commission bill passed preliminary reading as protests and court pressure intensify.
- **Conscription Crunch Week Ahead** — The Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee scheduled marathon sessions on the draft law next week. Manpower arithmetic is about to collide with coalition math, with real operational consequences if it stalls.
- **Weather as Operational Variable** — Heavy rain and flash-flood risk from Samaria to the Negev this weekend will constrain maneuver and logistics.

Again, Hamas wants Phase II as a withdrawal mechanism. Hezbollah wants quiet as rebuild time. Foreign capitals want “progress” without seizure authority. The next moves hinge on whether Israel answers the Rafah IED without letting the ceasefire fiction set the rules, whether Lebanon absorbs expanding strike geometry without a miscalculated reply, and whether Washington accepts sequencing or tries to force choreography.

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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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