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ISRAEL BRIEF

Friday, December 26

Washington wants 'Phase II.' Israel wants security. The fight is over who owns the verbs: disarm, govern, verify.

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THE BOTTOM LINE Western-Islamist division of labor: state patrons run influence, West runs feelings, Israel runs enforcement while apologizing. Qatar's "mediator" branding shields operations. Turkey's Gaza bid leverages influence promoting jihadi ideology; Syrian radar restricts without firing shots. Major religious authority speaking in tents-and-weather metaphors shapes diplomatic weather for capitals preferring condemnation to responsibility. World moralizing should start requiring weapons removal from terrorists rather than more ammunition provision.

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Israel Brief: Friday, December 26

WASHINGTON wants “Phase II.” Israel wants security. The fight is over who owns the verbs: disarm, govern, verify.

Shabbat Shalom

Gaza enforcement remains active while diplomatic capitals search for frameworks avoiding seizures. Northern operations target Iranian infrastructure in Lebanon as Turkey seeks radar positioning over Syrian territory.

Flash Brief

- **Gaza:** Yellow Line enforcement continues with airstrikes on Khan Yunis and corridor adjustments
- **Northern Front:** IDF-ISA removes senior Iranian Unit 840 operative in Beqaa region
- **Syria Lane:** Turkey reportedly pushes radar deployment in Syria to restrict Israeli airspace
- **Judea & Samaria:** Counterterror arrests proceed; civilian incident triggers Area A alert
- **Diplomacy:** Germany declines Gaza force participation, opposes permanent Israel-Hamas partition
- **Washington Track:** Netanyahu meets Trump regarding Phase II sequencing and post-conflict planning
- **Home Front:** Trust and manpower remain critical as political leadership faces cohesion challenges

The War Today

GAZA ENFORCEMENT HOLDS AS HAMAS TRADES VIOLENCE FOR PROCESS
IDF operations along Gaza’s Yellow Line maintained active enforcement as multiple terrorists crossing boundaries were eliminated across northern and southern sectors. Engineering activity intensified near Salah al-Din Road in Gaza City, with drone-placed demolition charges and evacuations indicating westward line tightening. Air, helicopter, and naval strikes targeted Rafah, Khan Yunis, and Deir al-Balah. Northern Gaza Brigade forces dismantled over four kilometers of tunnel networks, uncovering weapons in civilian spaces. Hamas continues withholding fallen soldier Ran Gvili while shielding Islamic Jihad figures with burial information. Israeli negotiators pressed Egypt on operational recovery terms.

ASSESSMENT

Hamas introduces marginal violence while betting diplomats will advance Phase II regardless. Tunnel clearances matter operationally, removing rebuild options and forcing Hamas toward exposure or paralysis. Hostage delay represents policy, not negotiating friction. Any framework advancing without the final fallen Israeli soldier institutionalizes ransom incentives and rewards delay tactics.

STRIKE GEOMETRY EXPANDS AS IRAN'S UNIT 840 GETS CUT

Israel widened strike operations across Lebanon while degrading Iranian command nodes. UAV strikes eliminated Hezbollah operatives in southern

villages and the Beqaa region. Most significantly, IDF-ISA eliminated Hussein Mahmoud Marshad al-Jawhari, identified as senior Quds Force Unit 840 operative responsible for directing Iranian terror plots from the Syria-Lebanon arena. Vehicle strikes near additional Beqaa locations killed additional operatives. Reports indicate Turkey attempting radar system deployment on Syrian territory, potentially restricting Israeli air operations.

ASSESSMENT

The northern arena represents an Iranian operations problem. Unit 840 comprises Iran's forward attack infrastructure—eliminating it signals intent to make rebuild assets perishable regardless of location. Hezbollah's restraint remains tactical, buying reconstitution time while diplomacy seeks “formats” avoiding seizures. Turkey's radar initiative represents the most serious external constraint, potentially narrowing freedom of action precisely when Iran compresses timelines.

Inside Israel

QATARGATE TURNS TRUST INTO A COMBAT VARIABLE

Dual investigations examine October 7 events and state authority chain integrity. A former spokesperson publicly claimed classified leaks ran with the Prime Minister “in the picture,” describing paid pro-Qatar messaging flows through intermediaries attempting to shape coverage and undercut Egypt's standing. Coalition figures stated that senior aides working for Qatar during wartime warrant imprisonment. The attorney general warned that Knesset committees are being used to intimidate legal officials, with threatening language toward state representatives becoming normalized. Public opinion indices show Israelis maintain belief in elections and residency preference but increasingly distrust institutions and rate democracy poorly across partisan and ethnic lines.

ASSESSMENT

Qatargate proves corrosive because it intersects the hostage-war interface: influence campaigns shape reputations, constraints, partners, and adversary expectations. The attorney general's warning describes institutional self-attack and requests cessation.

COHESION CRACKS AS SERVICE EQUITY BECOMES MISSION-CRITICAL

Manpower shortage manifests as behavioral problem, not mathematical abstraction. Reservist accounts describe 320-350 service days across multiple theaters, with teams stating refusal for next rotations absent clear emergency, citing employment loss, family strain, and perceived leadership failure. This directly targets the draft fault line: haredi exemptions function as morale weapons against those reporting. The Knesset expanded IDF and security service hacking authority into civilian security cameras without warrant requirements, decoupling from operational thresholds while removing notice and oversight safeguards. An Iranian espionage case involved surveillance near former leadership residence by an individual working in sensitive environments. Israel requests expanding burden from shrinking cohorts while improvising invasive powers faster than governance fixes the service contract.

ASSESSMENT

Veteran labor-union rhetoric signals late arrival. The state cannot treat refusal as PR problem while managing draft inequality through “coalition management.” Enemy success requires no brigade defeats if brigades simply stop arriving. Camera-hacking law separation from wartime thresholds converts emergency necessity into permanent habit. Iranian “gig espionage” thrives in societies blurring civilian-soldier, oversight-intimidation, and emergency-routine distinctions. Solutions require credible universal service frameworks, wartime authorities with real oversight, and political decisions signaling state respect.

ENERGY CASH-OUT ACCELERATES AS COST OF LIVING CLOCK STARTS

Government “historic” gas export expansion to Egypt framed as fiscal wind-fall and strategic leverage, though expert analysis warns potential domestic supply pressure within roughly a decade, raising electricity costs absent rapid renewable scaling and coherent policy. Finance minister threatened banking sector with heavier taxation pursuing customer benefits, triggering market reaction. Municipal governance braces for friction: 2026 arnona reform shifting from child-count to income-based models risks expanded eligibility while cutting revenue exceeding ₪1 billion annually, potentially pushing authorities toward deficits. Sovereignty politics receives trolling application: Judea-and-Samaria legislation drew sharp haredi city mayor rebuke labeling it populism.

ASSESSMENT

Israel collects short-term victories while quietly loading long-term liabilities. Energy independence erosion faster than alternative development creates cost-of-living impacts landing on families already stretched by reserve cycles, taxation, and service decay—transforming spreadsheet problems into cohesion failures. Bank-tax threats and reform warnings reflect state improvisation in revenue and control lanes, producing “active” governance while publics feel trapped. Sovereignty “bill as prank” gifts cynicism: politicians using national doctrine as stunts teach voters to discount doctrine.

Israel and the World

LAWFARE AND RECOGNITION PRESSURE CONVERGE ON JUDEA AND SAMARIA

Coordinated Western statement by 14 nations condemned Israeli cabinet decisions establishing communities in Judea and Samaria, framing actions as illegal and destabilizing, explicitly linking to Gaza Phase II prospects as operational constraints. Israeli foreign ministry rejected posture as discriminatory and selective, highlighting Palestinian Authority illegal construction silence while grounding Israel’s position in Mandate-era and UN Charter arguments. Spanish regional election results weakened governing Socialist coalition that led European isolation moves, with corruption scandals entangling with foreign-policy theater. Pro-Israel civil society read shift as domestic backlash against government reaching for Israel-bashing as distraction.

ASSESSMENT

Condemning Jewish settlement in Area C proves easy; ignoring Arab construction there remains ignored. Dismantling Hamas or disarming Hezbollah demands difficult work. Foreign capitals pick costless levers creating Israeli concessions while avoiding responsibility for “day after” governance. They threaten settlements will “undermine” Gaza arrangements treating Hamas weapons as mood rather than material fact. Spain’s political wobble reveals weak joint: when foreign policy hostility serves domestic diversion, erosion follows when domestic stories collapse.

DIASPORA THREAT PICTURE HARDENS AS INCITEMENT GOES HIGH-VOLUME

Post-Bondi dynamics metastasized across diaspora security fronts. Israeli monitoring reported antisemitic discourse spike in Australia multiplying from thousands to tens of thousands daily mentions post-attack, remaining elevated with warnings that “online incitement functions as accelerant for physical threats.” Utah police arrested 21-year-old after alleged synagogue threats, recovering explosive devices and firearms with detention ordered without bail. Norwegian left party staged Hanukkah candle-lighting “for Palestinians” claiming solidarity against antisemitism—repurposing Jewish ritual as political prop. “Nation brand” reporting framed Israel perception collapse widening from government policy to Israelis as people, signaling hostility becoming social permission rather than diplomatic language.

ASSESSMENT

Propaganda creates permission; permission produces plots; politicians then request calm. Utah case demonstrates high-volume incitement lowering fantasy-to-action barriers while providing cultural soundtrack for threats. Norway’s candle stunt represents soft version—perform empathy, launder blame, treat Jewish trauma as moral branding stage. “Israel brand” discourse functions as serious permission metric: labeling Israelis “toxic” normalizes exclusion, boycott, eventually violence.

MEDIATION BECOMES COVER AS STATE PATRONS SEEK IMMUNITY

Diplomatic theater tightened around enforcement responsibility questions. Israeli security and diplomatic signals increasingly treated Qatar as incitement and influence actor rather than neutral mediator, formally identifying Doha as hostile messaging driver demanding cessation of media-fueled incitement. Research dossier argued Qatar’s role—sanctuary, financing, ideological reinforcement, global reach—helped build Hamas capabilities and ambitions. Reports describe Turkey deploying radar systems on Syrian territory restricting Israeli airspace freedom while positioning itself as sole “day after” Gaza volunteer—importing Hamas patrons into enforcement roles. Pope Leo’s Christmas sermon spotlighted Gaza conditions, illustrating humanitarian language fusing into global moral authority claims often detached from reality.

ASSESSMENT

Western-Islamist division of labor: state patrons run influence, West runs feelings, Israel runs enforcement while apologizing. Qatar's "mediator" branding shields operations. Turkey's Gaza bid leverages influence promoting jihadi ideology; Syrian radar restricts without firing shots. Major religious authority speaking in tents-and-weather metaphors shapes diplomatic weather for capitals preferring condemnation to responsibility. World moralizing should start requiring weapons removal from terrorists rather than more ammunition provision.

Briefly Noted**CULTURE, RELIGION & SOCIETY**

- Police escorted Holocaust survivor Igo Margolis, who died alone, to dignified burial after body went unclaimed. Survivor generation vanishing makes state itself final Jewish memory and dignity custodian.
- Israel Police denied raiding Christmas event in Haifa, stating detention of three disorderly individuals while securing celebration occurred. Routine policing deliberately reframed as anti-Christian persecution—narrative laundering by terror-linked outlets.

DIPLOMACY & GEOPOLITICS

- Mahmoud Abbas faced Judea and Samaria protests after restructuring “pay-for-slay” stipends into welfare mechanism under U.S.-Israeli pressure. Backlash confirms payments never represented social policy but core terror incentive; PA “reform” collapses when martyrdom loses salary.

ECONOMY, TECH & INFRASTRUCTURE

- \$7.75 billion Armis cybersecurity firm sale expected delivering hundreds of millions tax revenue reignites reinvestment versus deficit-filling debate. Strategic fork: compound Israel's tech advantage or eat seed corn papering today's budget holes.

Developments to Watch**HOME FRONT & POLITICS**

- **Trump Meeting Becomes Sequencing Fight** — Netanyahu travels Saturday to meet President Trump regarding Gaza Phase II, “day after,” Iran, Lebanon, and Houthis. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Public Red Lines Harden** — Polling shows overwhelming opposition-voter resistance to advancement before Ran Gvili's return and Turkish troop roles, alongside majority resistance to reconstruction before disarmament. Numbers holding narrows opposition silence and political space for “international force” fantasies.

NORTHERN FRONT (LEBANON / SYRIA)

- **Unit 840 Attrition Continues** — IDF-ISA strikes in Beqaa targeted Iranian-directed operatives including senior Quds Force Unit 840 figure tied to Syria-Lebanon plots. Iran will feel pressure answering through proxies or deniable lanes. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

- **Beqaa Precision Pattern** — Multiple vehicle eliminations near Lebanon-Syria border reported with “ninja missile” claims resurfacing. Precision deep in Beqaa makes rebuild assets perishable; Hezbollah incentive involves forcing cheaper responses than Beirut.
- **Low-Altitude Dahieh Warning** — Hezbollah-linked sources reported armed UAVs flying low over Dahieh urging shelter. Israel signals no safe districts exist; Hezbollah tempted restoring “deterrence” through miscalculated shots.
- **Quneitra Positioning Tightens** — IDF deploying prefabricated structures in Quneitra countryside continuing reinforcement. Northern buffer becomes physical permanence, soon kindling diplomatic litigation.
- **Turkey Radar Lane Builds** — Reports of Turkey deploying radar systems on Syrian soil continued, framed as Damascus “support” but operated by Ankara. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Russia Security-Deal Mediation** — Moscow mediates Israel-Syria security talks with U.S. approval; Israeli source notes partial progress despite large gaps. Russia wants northern playbook veto—costly for Israel.

GAZA & SOUTHERN THEATER

- **Khan Yunis Strike Pair** — Gazan sources reported two Israeli airstrikes in Khan Yunis; casualty details unclear.
- **Yellow Line Push West** — Drone-placed demolition charges near Salah al-Din Road in Gaza City’s Tuffah neighborhood reported again alongside evacuations and westward shift claims.
- **Multi-Axis Strike Drumbeat** — Significant air, helicopter, naval fire across Rafah, Khan Yunis, Deir al-Balah, Gaza City. Signals sustained enforcement and corridor shaping rather than “Phase II vibes” regardless foreign capital sales.
- **Border Drone Intercepts (West)** — IAF intercepted two drones crossing into Israel in smuggling attempt; IDF emphasized non-Yemeni origin.

JUDEA & SAMARIA

- **Area A “Rescue” Loop** — Security forces responded after Israeli civilian entered Palestinian vehicle near Elias Junction; individual located without injuries. Red signs exist for reasons; read and obey.
- **Cell Roll-Up in Samaria** — Duvdevan arrested four terrorists in Jayus planning attack; additional suspects detained after rock-throwing near Kifl Haris and Deir Istiya.
- **Reservist Misconduct Flashpoint** — IDF terminated reservist’s service and confiscated weapon after footage showed gunfire and ramming incident near Dayr Jarir in civilian clothes. Single idiot delivers enemy weeks propaganda, costs state significant political capital.

REGIONAL AXIS (IRAN, HOUTHIS, MILITIAS)

- **Iran Missile Timeline Pressure** — Reporting amplified warnings that Iran's missile program becomes forcing function for renewed confrontation absent U.S. deal. Tehran strategy obvious: rebuild volume, dare Israel, cry victim when Israel refuses quiet death.
- **Iraq Normalization Rejection** — Iraq's prime minister publicly rejected normalization language while senior religious messaging reframed Iraq's identity story for international consumption.

HOME FRONT & POLITICS

- **Civil Readiness Conference Signal** — Channel 12 reported Home Front Command holding conference enhancing civil readiness “for upcoming battle.” Quiet admission leadership expects real round ahead—not hypothetical war-gaming.

DIPLOMATIC & LEGAL

- **Germany Declines Gaza Force** — Berlin stated no foreseeable force participation in Gaza while warning against permanent Israel-Hamas Strip division. Europe wants outcomes without responsibility, issuing “warnings” from safe distance while Israel works.

No credible actor wants Hamas disarmament, yet everyone wants Israel advancing first. Germany's “no force” answer proves honest but leaves Israel holding liability while Europe holds microphone. Next inflection decides between Netanyahu and Trump at Mar-a-Lago. Phase II framing as “transition” without seizure authority gives Hamas mulligan for another October 7th attempt.

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

Give this to the friend still mistaking process for peace.

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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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