



Forensic intelligence for those who act.

READER EDITION

December 30, 2025

ISRAEL BRIEF

Tuesday, December 30

Control Shifts From Firepower To Permissions. Iran Rebuilds; Hamas Rebrands; Turkey Tests Airspace And Ego.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE At least Europe's consistent. Allow incitement, meekly apologize, then "investigate," then repeat. Aliyah is the scoreboard. Fewer Jews are waiting for Western institutions to "get it," and more are treating Israel as the only state that doesn't ask Jews to disappear quietly for everyone else's comfort. Israel's strategic task is to stop playing debate club and start building durable influence networks—because the West is building a post-truth culture where "Zionist" is a socially acceptable slur and violence becomes normalized.

CLASSIFICATION

Reader Edition

DISTRIBUTION

Open · Free to share with attribution

THE shooting wars keep going, but the real contest keeps migrating to sequencing and permission—who gets to move, who gets to “consult,” and who gets to hide behind process while rearming. The storm turned Israel’s roads into choke points and Gaza’s ground into a tunnel X-ray, while Iran’s streets hosted mass protests and Tehran’s leadership scrambled for financial oxygen. Everyone wants Israel to pause, and nobody (besides Israel) is willing to seize arms from terrorists.

IN THIS EDITION

Flash Brief	3
The War Today	3
Trump Signals Permission; Iran Tests Thresholds, Inventory, And Nerves	3
Gaza’s Tunnel World Refuses To Die & Diplomacy Tries To Stop The Autopsy	4
Inside Israel	4
Authority Eats Itself While Enemies Take Notes	5
Corruption Turns Access Into An Attack Vector	5
Israel and the World	5
Washington Offers Permission, Not Poetry	5
Houthis Threaten; Activists Swarm The UAE For “Zionism”	6
The West’s “Optics Class” Keeps Producing Antisemites	6
Briefly Noted	7
Frontline & Security	7
Domestic & Law	7
Economy, Tech & Infrastructure	7
Culture, Religion & Society	8
Developments to Watch	8
Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)	8
Gaza & Southern Theater	8
Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)	8
Diplomatic & Legal	9
Home Front & Politics	9

Flash Brief

- **Washington:** Trump signals strike permissiveness on Iran missiles and ties Phase B to Hamas disarmament.
- **Iran:** Protests spread as the rial slides and the regime convenes emergency economic management.
- **Gaza:** Tunnel exposure accelerates as storms collapse ground.
- **Northern Front:** Turkey's Syria radar push tightens a quiet airspace tax on Israel's route geometry.
- **Red Sea:** Houthis declare any Israeli presence a military target; recognition talk spreads southward.
- **Home Front:** Storm closures and infrastructure strain hit mobility while Iran runs low-grade cyber contact attempts.
- **Institutions:** Courtroom friction and Qatargate pressure keep converting governance into a procedural cage match.

B ELLOW: where sequencing pressure concentrates, which constraints are real, and what shifts next.

Tehran tries to reload faster than defenses can replenish, Hamas tries to sell “governance” while drowning underground, and Ankara tries to reduce Israeli freedom of action with radar batteries instead of tanks.

The War Today

Trump Signals Permission; Iran Tests Thresholds, Inventory, And Nerves

Reports describe the IRGC accelerating ballistic-missile reconstitution, relocating launchers eastward, and—if the sourcing holds—pursuing chemical and biological warheads as an escalation option designed to terrify and complicate deterrence. Tehran's internal pressure is rising: protests have spread across multiple cities amid currency freefall, an emergency economic meeting was convened, and the central bank governor reportedly submitted his resignation while anti-regime chants and clashes intensified. Israel chose to pour accelerant on the regime's insecurity by publicly encouraging street action in Farsi—an unusually overt signal that Israel is not just watching Iran, it's shaping Iran's attention bandwidth. Over this, Washington's messaging matters more than everyone else's “concern.” Trump publicly framed renewed Iranian buildup as something the US would “knock down,” signaled willingness to allow Israeli strikes (missiles, and “even faster” on nuclear), threatened “gates of hell” language tied to Hamas disarmament, and teased “surprises” in the coming days. Israel's next Iran round could be harder on the home front because interceptor stockpiles (especially US layers) are depleted and slow to replenish.

ASSESSMENT

The West's brilliant plan—again—is to run short on interceptors and long on statements. Iran doesn't need a perfect missile wave—it needs enough volume, over enough nights, to make Israelis feel the ceiling coming down and to make Washington start pricing “support” as optional. The protest spike is an operational variable: a regime under internal stress becomes more paranoid, more trigger-happy, and more tempted to externalize crisis. If the IRGC is indeed exploring unconventional payload paths, the correct posture is not enough consequences to stop catastrophe in its tracks.

Gaza's Tunnel World Refuses To Die & Diplomacy Tries To Stop The Autopsy

Hamas markets governance arrangements while the military problem stays underground—literally. Engineering forces are described as in a race to locate and destroy tunnels between the border fence and the Yellow Line before “diplomatic processes” halt operations, with officials admitting a massive prewar intelligence gap on the tunnel architecture and prioritizing mainlines first, then hardening the buffer posture. The weather itself exposed something Hamas prefers buried: heavy rains collapsed ground inside the buffer area, revealing a major underground cavity suspected to be a significant tunnel roughly 800 meters from the fence. A senior Hamas figure is now demanding a Palestinian committee to govern Gaza and openly calling for US pressure on Netanyahu to implement ceasefire clauses and move to the next phase—because nothing says “demilitarization” like asking for diplomatic leverage while refusing to disarm. Hamas also used a staged messaging moment to confirm senior losses months after the fact. It acknowledged the death of its longtime military spokesman (killed in an airstrike months ago) and formally referenced the elimination of top command figures previously confirmed by Israel—rebranding the spokesman title as if a new facade could ever change the organization underneath. Israel, meanwhile, is treating October 7's failure as an airpower doctrine rewrite: massive increases in aerial readiness, revised alert timelines measured in minutes, predefined sector targets to prevent paralysis when comms fail, standing “air combat teams,” hundreds of prepared landing zones (including extensive coverage in Judea and Samaria), and a formalized border-defense mission inside the air arm.

ASSESSMENT

Hamas is trying to win the sequencing fight by turning “Phase B” into an Israeli withdrawal mechanism while it preserves the assets it relies on: tunnels, command survivability, and reconstitution pathways. The “civil committee” pitch is a con. Hamas can rename spokesmen and demand committees all day... but the only language it consistently understands is concrete removed, shafts blown up, and time denied.

Inside Israel

Authority Eats Itself While Enemies Take Notes

Israel's internal power struggle crossed from institutional friction into raw force language as Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich publicly vowed to “trample” Supreme Court President Isaac Amit, triggering condemnation from the judiciary, opposition leaders, and security voices. The clash landed amid a High Court freeze on the Army Radio shutdown, continued petitions against wartime executive actions, and intensifying demands—now including senior coalition ministers—for consequences in the Qatargate affair (where close aides to Benjamin Netanyahu are accused of advancing Qatar's interests). Parallel to the rhetoric, the IDF launched the most extensive internal war reviews in its history—Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran—explicitly interrogating macro-level failures, tunnel intelligence gaps, hostage constraints, and campaign design, with findings to shape force development.

ASSESSMENT

When ministers talk like street enforcers and courts answer with injunctions, adversaries hear opportunity. The judiciary–executive collision remains a security variable—absorbing bandwidth, legitimizing paralysis, and advertising internal fracture. Qatargate compounds the damage because it sits at the hostage–war interface. The IDF's reviews are necessary and overdue, but they cannot substitute for a clear chain of authority. The country is discovering, again, that Basic Laws without a constitution invite veto warfare when stress peaks. This is the structural fault line mapped in earlier analysis—and it is, unfortunately, operational.

Corruption Turns Access Into An Attack Vector

Indictments against security guards at a Givat Ze'ev barrier exposed a paid “free passage” scheme that waved hundreds of illegal entrants through checkpoints, allegedly for tens of thousands of shekels in bribes—an exact match to recent terror-routing patterns. The case sits alongside sustained operations around Qabatiya, home-sealing measures after ramming attacks, and renewed scrutiny of traffic violence near Jerusalem. It also coincides with a historic policy shift allowing Jewish visits to Joseph's Tomb during the day for the first time since 2000.

ASSESSMENT

Israel cannot tolerate a security culture that prosecutes terrorists while subcontracting access control to temptation. Lock the gates, jail the brokers, and stop pretending labor policy is separable from lethality.

Israel and the World

Washington Offers Permission, Not Poetry

The Trump–Netanyahu summit produced explicit deterrence language on Iran's renewed buildup (“eradicate” any confirmed reconstitution), an open

signal of strike permissiveness on ballistic missiles and faster action on nuclear, and an attempted rebranding of Gaza sequencing as “Phase B” conditioned on Hamas disarmament—paired with theatrical threats about “gates of hell” and “surprises” in the coming days. Trump publicly floated flexibility on Turkish troops in Gaza (“a lot depends on Bibi”), teased serious consideration of F-35 sales to Turkey with a wink-and-promise that Ankara “will never use them on Israel,” and spoke loosely about Judea and Samaria “understandings.” Behind the cameras, the administration’s internal divide surfaced as a strategic constraint vector: one camp pushing rapid cross-front “progress” (Gaza governance mechanism, Lebanon civilian talks, Syria security arrangement) while another camp aligns more closely with an Iran ultimatum posture and war-prep logic.

ASSESSMENT

Washington is the arena. And arenas reward performance—who controls the verbs. If “Phase B” becomes a diplomatic exit ramp without seizure authority, Hamas survives and the U.S. inherits the humiliation. If Turkey gets imported into Gaza enforcement structures, that is just outsourcing authority to a Hamas patron and calling it “inclusive.” And if Turkey gets F-35s under the logic of “trust me,” Israel should price that as an intelligence and airspace problem. Trump’s loud permission is useful, though it isn’t on its own sufficient.

Houthis Threaten; Activists Swarm The UAE For “Zionism”

Somaliland’s position opposite Yemen, at the Gulf of Aden, connects directly to Houthi targeting of shipping lanes and the long-running cost of rerouting global trade—felt in Israeli prices and strategic risk. The Houthi leader responded as expected, declaring any Israeli presence a legitimate military target, while parallel reporting describes growing friction in southern Yemen as the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council expands eastward into resource-rich territory, sharpening Saudi-UAE rivalry over maritime nodes and influence architecture. In Europe, anti-Israel activists staged a stunt at the UAE’s London embassy—replacing signage with “Zionists” branding and corpse-theater props—to punish normalization and intimidate Abraham Accords partners.

ASSESSMENT

The Houthis are panicking because geography creates surveillance and disruption options that threaten their Red Sea leverage franchise. And the loudest “anti-normalization” theatrics in London aren’t about Sudan or Gaza—they are about isolating Arab states that refuse to remain prisoners of the Palestinian veto. Congratulations on joining the civilized world—here is your complimentary mob of useless idiots. Israel should treat Somaliland as part of a wider Red Sea posture, and it should use the backlash as proof of value: if enemy proxies scream, you hit a nerve.

The West’s “Optics Class” Keeps Producing Antisemites

Western societies continue to treat Jew-hate as a public-relations issue until it manifests in uniforms and institutions. Germany is probing an elite paratrooper regiment over alleged far-right and openly antisemitic behavior, Nazi

salutes, and abuse—because even Europe’s “serious” organs are not immune to ideological rot. In the UK ecosystem, a British Muslim TikTok traveler faced backlash simply for describing Ben-Gurion Airport security as professional and humane—followed by the nauseatingly predictable “correction” performance and comment warfare over naming Israel at all. In Ireland, newly released state documents show officials were rattled decades ago by coverage of Jewish cemetery desecration and worried that engaging Israel might antagonize Arab states. Protect the optics, neglect the Jews. Meanwhile, aliyah data shows immigration from Western countries rose materially—US, France, UK and others—amid skyrocketing antisemitism and high-profile attacks abroad. Alongside that, a strategic critique of Israel’s public diplomacy argues the state keeps renting attention (influencers, delegations) instead of building long-term influence through leadership cultivation and belonging.

ASSESSMENT

At least Europe’s consistent. Allow incitement, meekly apologize, then “investigate,” then repeat. Aliyah is the scoreboard. Fewer Jews are waiting for Western institutions to “get it,” and more are treating Israel as the only state that doesn’t ask Jews to disappear quietly for everyone else’s comfort. Israel’s strategic task is to stop playing debate club and start building durable influence networks—because the West is building a post-truth culture where “Zionist” is a socially acceptable slur and violence becomes normalized.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- **Israel National News:** The IDF Spokesperson’s unit cut its Haaretz subscription as part of a government decision urging state bodies to sever ties with a paper whose publisher called for sanctions and praised Palestinian terrorists as “freedom fighters.”

Domestic & Law

- **Jerusalem Post:** After Iraq moved to legalize child marriage under Ja’fari law language about “maturity,” Baghdad’s bridal market reportedly surged with girls sold to older men.

Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- **Jerusalem Post:** Mizrahi-Tefahot will offer a NIS 1,000 “children of the war” savings grant for every child born since October 7, conditioned on opening/using an account and hitting a monthly threshold. It’s equal parts social branding and customer acquisition—Israel’s banks discovered solidarity is more profitable when it auto-debits.
- **Globes:** A new private hospital network, Medica, is consolidating four medical centers and says most activity will come via health funds, not private

insurance, with Leumit and Meuhedet holding stakes. This is “quiet nationalization” by spreadsheet: public money, private structures, and regulators pretending the incentives won’t eat the system alive.

Culture, Religion & Society

- **JNS:** The article describes how a small academic ecosystem laundered the “genocide” libel into “consensus” through gatekeeping, scripture weaponization, and peer-review ideological policing. As discussed in related work, NGOs and academics mint the moral permission slip, jihadists cash it.
- **Times of Israel:** Palestinian illegal waste burning is choking communities while ministries fight turf, budgets stall, and enforcement treats toxic smoke like an optional policy debate. The state must act because citizens don’t want to inhale the consequences of their failures.
- **JNS:** A 2,000-year-old mikveh was uncovered beneath the Western Wall Plaza with ash layers tied to the 70 CE destruction.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

Radar Tax Builds in Syria — Reporting continues that Turkey is pushing radar deployments on Syrian soil to monitor Israeli air activity. This is escalation-by-infrastructure: once switched on, it narrows Israel’s margin for preemption without a single shot fired.

Gaza & Southern Theater

Hamas Speech Signals Attrition — Public confirmation is damage control, not transparency, and often precedes internal tightening or an attempt to reset deterrence optics.

Weather Exposes Tunnel Map — Storm-driven collapses near the buffer continue to surface subterranean infrastructure.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

IRGC Exploring Chemical and Biological Weapons — Opposition-linked reporting claims the IRGC is accelerating chemical/biological warhead development for ballistic missiles while relocating launch assets eastward. If validated, this shifts escalation logic from volume to terror payloads and shortens Israel’s tolerance window. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Iran Street Pressure Meets Externalization — Protests spread across multiple cities as the rial slides, the central bank chief resigns, and police visibly retreat. Regimes under internal stress don’t calm down; they look outward for distraction.

Houthi Somaliland Red Line — The Houthi leader reiterated that any Israeli presence in Somaliland is a “legitimate military target.” Loud threats signal

fear of losing Red Sea leverage, not confidence—and fear drives miscalculation.

Southern Yemen Recognition Talk — Israeli reporting suggests Jerusalem is weighing recognition of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council. This would harden the Red Sea chessboard and invite proxy theatrics aimed at deterrence-by-noise.

Diplomatic & Legal

Trump–Netanyahu Window Narrows — Trump publicly signaled strike permissiveness on Iran’s missile and nuclear tracks while floating ambiguity on Turkey in Gaza and Judea and Samaria “understandings.” This is a short window where permissions harden or evaporate. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Phase B Ultimatum Test — Trump tied “Phase B” to Hamas disarmament with explicit time pressure. Either enforcement authority materializes fast—or the threat becomes another rhetorical IOU Hamas will happily default on.

Home Front & Politics

Cyber Nuisance Campaign — Iran-linked SMS messages offering “defection” or contact hit Israeli phones, prompting a national cyber warning. Low-grade harassment is rehearsal: probing trust, filters, and public discipline ahead of something sharper.

Permission signals got louder, but the leash is still being measured in Turkish “maybes” and Phase B theatrics. The coming days hinge on three inflection points: whether Iran’s internal stress externalizes into proxy pressure, whether the Gaza tunnel race gets interrupted by a diplomacy-induced stop order, and whether Turkey’s airspace taxation moves from rumor to operational fact. Process is the enemy’s oxygen—deny it, or prepare to breathe through a gas mask.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Uriel Zehavi

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR · MITZPE INSTITUTE

Uriel Zehavi is the executive director of Mitzpe Institute, where he writes the daily Israel Brief and co-directs its Institutional Intelligence practice with Modi Zehavi. He is the author of four books from Mitzpe Press and advises Israeli and allied clients on strategic communications for Western audiences.



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.

PASSED ALONG TO YOU?

The daily Israel Brief is free at mitzpe.org. The operational layer — Closed Dossiers, Vantage, and Watchwords — is members-only. Become a member, gift a membership, or book a briefing at mitzpe.org.

Reader Edition · Free to share with attribution to Mitzpe Institute.