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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

Friday, January 9

Iran goes dark at home while it clears lanes abroad.

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THE BOTTOM LINE When authorities manage Jews as a public-order problem instead of managing criminals as criminals, intimidation becomes policy. Intelligence is buried, victims are blamed, and the record is massaged after the fact. Britain's problem is not a lack of tools but refusal to use them against the right people. New York's problem is worse: ideological capture at the top that treats incitement as authenticity. The downstream effect will be more violence.

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Flash Brief

- **Northern Front:** LAF declares the south cleared; IDF keeps striking Hezbollah rebuild operators.
- **Gaza:** Gaza City launch fails near hospital; Israel hits launch sites and Hamas infrastructure.
- **Rafah:** Opening remains political, tied to Ran Gvili's return. Operational plan sits ready.
- **Iran:** Nationwide internet blackout continues; IRGC ground forces deploy as Trump issues explicit warnings.
- **Diaspora & Lawfare:** US states push ATA claims forward; Belgium escalates consular punishment against some citizens in Israel.
- **Home Front:** Shin Bet arrests ISIS-inspired minor; internal security keeps absorbing global jihad outputs.

The War Today

South of the Litani: Paper Control, Live Targets

Lebanon's military formally declared that Hezbollah has been disarmed south of the Litani, with exceptions only for areas it claims remain under Israeli control. Israel immediately rejected this assessment, citing extensive surviving infrastructure, active rearmament, and Iranian-backed reconstruction occurring faster than dismantlement. Israeli strikes continued, including elimination of a Hezbollah drone operator tied to intelligence collection and infrastructure rehabilitation. Israeli officials assess Hezbollah remains capable of rocket fire, anti-tank attacks, and infiltration raids despite degradation of the Radwan Force and reduced rocket-launch tempo. Jerusalem is preparing a focused, time-limited escalation option while deliberately calibrating timing amid Iranian unrest, cautious that a broader Lebanon campaign could serve Tehran's interest by shifting attention away from internal regime instability. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Beirut alongside senior Quds Force coordination in Iraq.

ASSESSMENT

The Lebanese Army's claim functions as a liability, inviting international pressure on Israel to stand down while Hezbollah maintains weapons and drones. Israel's current posture is attritional: make rebuild lanes perishable, kill specialists, and keep escalation authority in reserve. The real constraint is not Hezbollah's strength but Tehran's calendar. Israel understands that a major Lebanon operation right now might provide narrative oxygen to Iran just as the regime faces internal pressure. That restraint should not be misread as acceptance—Hezbollah is on borrowed time.

Hamas Attempts Attack and Hides Behind Committees

Hamas violated the ceasefire with a projectile launched from Gaza City that fell short and landed near a hospital. Israel responded with precise strikes on

the launch site and associated infrastructure. This followed Hamas firing on IDF troops in northern Gaza the previous day, prompting targeted killing of a key operative advancing attacks. Simultaneously, Hamas signaled its preferred survival model by proposing a “civilian committee” of independent experts to administer Gaza while its armed wing remains intact. Israeli leadership reiterated that no transition proceeds without full demilitarization. Additional IDF strikes continued in Khan Yunis and western Gaza City.

ASSESSMENT

This represents the familiar Hamas maneuver: violate, absorb the strike, then launder power through bureaucracy. A rocket landing near a Gazan hospital reflects how Hamas operates within civilian density and then weaponizes aftermath. The proposed “civilian committee” functions as governance theater designed to preserve armed control while foreigners fund reconstruction. Until someone besides Israel confiscates rifles under fire, the job remains Israeli.

Iran Talks De-Escalation, Prepares Launch Corridors

Israel has conveyed repeated messages—through the United States, Russia, and European channels—that it is not seeking escalation with Iran. Tehran’s response has been uniform distrust. While no immediate Iranian strike indicators are present, Israeli assessments identify a pattern consistent with preemptive preparation: rerouted civilian air traffic, redeployment of offensive assets away from urban centers, reinforced radar coverage at military bases, and measures to secure clear air corridors for ballistic launches. Iran simultaneously dispatched senior officials to synchronize proxy posture, while IRGC Ground Forces were deployed domestically amid nationwide protests and a full internet blackout. President Trump publicly warned Tehran of severe consequences if more protesters are killed, as opposition figures called for coordinated mass demonstrations and regime media infrastructure was torched.

ASSESSMENT

The regime is under severe stress but not near collapse—making external diversion more likely, not less. Tehran’s objective is optionality: suppress internally, threaten externally, and choose the moment that reframes repression as “defense.” Israel is signaling restraint while reading the map honestly. The danger is a cornered regime exporting fear to survive another month.

Inside Israel

Money Moves and People Don’t — Before Law, Courts Catch Up

The High Court froze hundreds of millions of shekels earmarked for ultra-Orthodox education networks after the state admitted that substantial funds were transferred before Knesset Finance Committee approval. Justices described the committee process as effectively hollowed out, citing missing

protocols and lawmakers asked to ratify already-executed decisions. The transfers—part of a package exceeding a billion shekels—were challenged over procedure and substance, including lack of disclosed data on compliance with core curriculum requirements. The attorney general reinforced that funding cannot continue absent statutory compliance and supervision. The Council of Torah Sages convened on the haredi draft bill and withheld a public ruling while reportedly deciding to reject sanctions on draft evasion. Shas and UTJ continue threatening the 2026 budget over conscription terms, even as the IDF warned of acute manpower shortages and coalition negotiations stalled. New fault lines surfaced around who is allowed to serve: forty-two Israeli-raised children of migrant workers petitioned the High Court to enlist in the IDF, arguing that law permits conscription regardless of citizenship and that no statutory basis exists to bar them. Many completed Israeli schooling and pre-army programs. The IDF signaled openness amid manpower strain, pending political approval.

ASSESSMENT

When ministries move money first and ask permission later, parliamentary oversight becomes decorative and courts are forced into traffic-cop roles. The same pattern appears on the draft: endless rewrites, softer sanctions, and veto politics while reservists carry the load. People asking to serve are told to wait; people refusing to serve are negotiated with. Israel cannot run a war economy—particularly a long one—on wink-and-nod governance with people that should serve. The longer exemptions are preserved by procedural sleight of hand, the more corrosive the outcome: judicial escalation, coalition instability, and public resentment.

Law Enforcement Relearns Its Mandate

In Judea and Samaria, new regulations authorize confiscation of vehicles and equipment used in large-scale Palestinian trash burning, formally designated a national security threat due to health impact and cross-border harm. IDF Central Command is set to assume expanded enforcement authority with open-ended funding for suppression and cleanup. In the Negev and Arab sector, police operations intensified amid continued lethal violence, following years in which criminal gangs captured territory, weapons flows, and intimidation. Parallel actions targeted incitement and vandalism, including arrests tied to arson and mob violence.

ASSESSMENT

Trash burning is not an environmental dispute but coercive behavior with real health and security consequences. Organized crime in the Arab sector is not just community violence. The risk is half-application: announce national security framing, then underfund or over-lawyer it. That teaches everyone exactly how far they can push next time.

Israel and the World

Western Systems Test Terror Finance Boundaries

In the United States, a coalition of 25 states filed an unusually broad amici brief backing victims of October 7 and challenging early dismissal of Anti-Terrorism Act claims against American Muslims for Palestine and National Students for Justice in Palestine—arguing these groups functioned as propaganda, recruiting, and coordination nodes aligned with Hamas’s “unified command.” The states framed the case as a sovereign interest and warned that dismissing material-support claims before discovery guts the statute itself.

ASSESSMENT

This represents the first real stress test of whether Western law treats terror support as speech or infrastructure. The U.S. filing reframes the question from campus protest optics to liability chains—money, messaging, coordination, and foreknowledge. This is how terror networks operate.

Policing Fear Instead Of Criminals

British institutions continue unraveling under scrutiny over how they handled threats to Jews. Courts are hearing harassment charges against activists who placed child-sized body bags outside the home of the foreign secretary. Parliamentary inquiries revealed that West Midlands Police withheld intelligence about local elements planning to arm themselves and attack Israeli/Jewish fans—then blamed Israeli fans for the risk. Israeli officials flatly rejected claims they failed to share intelligence, stating they were never invited to relevant coordination meetings. Dutch authorities separately contradicted British attempts to rewrite events in Amsterdam, confirming organized anti-Jewish violence rather than fan misconduct. Across the Atlantic, New York City offers a parallel pathology: senior aides to the mayor publicly praised activists who openly justified killing IDF soldiers, while city leadership framed Jewish communal events as violations of “international law.” The result is predictable—credible threats, terroristic hate speech, and a police posture that invites escalation.

ASSESSMENT

When authorities manage Jews as a public-order problem instead of managing criminals as criminals, intimidation becomes policy. Intelligence is buried, victims are blamed, and the record is massaged after the fact. Britain’s problem is not a lack of tools but refusal to use them against the right people. New York’s problem is worse: ideological capture at the top that treats incitement as authenticity. The downstream effect will be more violence.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- Police arrested two illegal infiltrators from Hebron suspected of ripping dozens of mezuzahs off doorposts in Jaffa and Bat Yam.

- An Egyptian vessel briefly entered Israeli waters, ignored calls to stop, and the IDF used deterrent measures until it turned back.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- Israeli officials said Rafah will not open without a political decision, explicitly conditioning any limited people-only mechanisms on the return of Sgt. First Class Ran Gvili's body.

Culture, Religion & Society

- A press-freedom group's 2025 casualty tally reportedly listed 60 Gaza "journalists" killed, including 23 known to be affiliated with terror groups as operatives or propagandists. A press pass is not a license to commit terror.
- Australia announced a national royal commission into antisemitism and the Bondi Hanukkah terror shooting, with broad powers and a report due on the one-year anniversary of the attack.
- Amnesty's report on October 7 is criticized for omitting Hamas's charter language and repeated public calls to kill Jews and destroy Israel, while still leaning hard on "genocide" framing elsewhere.
- Swastikas were spray-painted on a Winnipeg synagogue ahead of Shabbat, prompting an investigation and increased security. This is the predictable outcome of over two years of normalized targeting: symbols first, then escalation, and authorities always acting surprised.

Developments to Watch

Judea & Samaria

Sustained Brigade Presence Hardens Terrain — IDF Paratroopers completed six months of uninterrupted operations across Jenin, Shomron, Benjamin, and Hebron with foot-heavy patrol doctrine and persistent ambushes. This tempo suppresses organized cells but raises lone-actor risk as networks lose command-and-control.

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

Kurdish Flashpoint Widens in Syria — Syrian regime shelling of Kurdish neighborhoods in Aleppo triggered displacement, curfews, and Israeli diplomatic warning shots. Any Turkish or Iranian exploitation here could drag Israel into indirect escalation.

Gaza & Southern Theater

Ceasefire Violations — A Gaza City rocket fell short near a hospital and was immediately answered with IDF precision strikes on launch sites and Hamas infrastructure.

Rafah Decision Window Narrows — Operational preparations for a limited people-only Rafah opening are complete, but remain politically frozen pending Ran Gvili's return.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

Iran Clears Launch Geometry Under Blackout — Tehran rerouted civilian air traffic, redeployed assets, reinforced radar, and imposed a nationwide internet blackout while deploying IRGC ground forces. These are preemption-enabling steps, not crowd control. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Trump-Pahlavi Optics Add Volatility — President Trump's warning to Iran over protest killings and a scheduled meeting with Reza Pahlavi compress Tehran's decision window.

Proxy Synchronization Accelerates — Iran dispatched Abbas Araghchi to Beirut and Esmail Qaani to Iraq for last-minute coordination with Hezbollah and militias. This looks like role assignment ahead of contingencies, not diplomacy.

Diplomatic & Legal

Somaliland — Israel-Somaliland discussions now include potential military basing near the Gulf of Aden. If agreed upon, expect rapid UN, Arab League, and NGO lawfare before facts on the ground harden.

Russian Signaling Watch Begins — U.S. officials are bracing for a Russian "show of force" maneuver as Moscow tracks Iran instability and regional shifts. Even symbolic moves could complicate Israeli airspace and deconfliction timing.

Home Front & Politics

ISIS-Inspired Minor Case — Shin Bet arrested a 15-year-old Israeli minor who pledged allegiance to ISIS and planned an attack. Lone-radicalization cases are low-volume but high-impact, and they track directly with regional jihadist messaging surges.

Watch for a Hezbollah "answer" designed to look small until it isn't, and for Tehran to externalize attention as its streets and networks go dark. Gaza remains a gun-and-hostage contest dressed up as administration.

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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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