



Forensic intelligence for those who act.

READER EDITION

January 12, 2026

ISRAEL BRIEF

Monday, January 12

Tehran kills in darkness as Washington studies the trigger. Israel keeps enforcing nearby fronts while the reserve bill keeps arriving.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE This is one of the region's favorite tricks—build “stability mechanisms” that let everyone avoid choosing sides and then act shocked when the same actors keep funding, hosting, and laundering jihadists. Riyadh's hedging and Ankara's pact-shopping are all about leverage. Israel should treat it accordingly: assume that any “new axis” is a bargaining chip and price it in operational terms—airspace risk, arms flows, proxy hosting, and the like.

CLASSIFICATION

Reader Edition

DISTRIBUTION

Open · Free to share with attribution

IRAN is executing its own citizens under a blackout crackdown while Washington weighs how far it goes—and every capital nearby is watching to see if Trump keeps his word. Gaza is still “administration” on paper and rifles in reality. Lebanon is still inspected rather than dismantled. Judea and Samaria keeps producing contact. The north is returning slowly, unevenly, and under a reserve system that keeps getting called back in early.

IN THIS EDITION

Flash Brief	3
The War Today	3
Tehran Threatens Israel As Trump Weighs Enforcing Protest Red Line	3
Lebanon Enforcement Hits Weapon Shafts As LAF Inspections Fail Again	4
Hamas Sells Technocrats, Keeps Guns; Shechem Shooting Shows Wider Contact	4
Inside Israel	5
Readiness Cuts Hit The Periphery As Iran Clock Forces Full Alert	5
Area C High-Rise Creep Near Jerusalem Tests Whether “Enforcement” Means Anything	5
Qatargate Expands From Advisers To Narratives As Friction Grows	6
Israel and the World	7
Synagogues Burn, Schools Ban Jews, And “Tenant Rights” Becomes A Weapon	7
Riyadh Hedges, Ankara Shops For Umbrellas, And Jerusalem Banks New Votes	7
Briefly Noted	8
Frontline & Security	8
Diplomacy & Geopolitics	8
Domestic & Law	8
Culture, Religion & Society	8
Developments to Watch	9
Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)	9
Gaza & Southern Theater	9
Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)	9
Diplomatic & Legal	10
Home Front & Politics	10
Judea & Samaria	10

Support note: On that note, yesterday while we were visiting a friend in Kiryat Shmona, our friend unexpectedly got called back up. After he already served in separate mobilizations in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, he's now back south again—while five kids and a business wait at home. Unfortunately, it's a pretty common story. That said, if you want to keep help the people who keep showing up functioning: you can give them some support.

Flash Brief

- **Iran:** Internet blackout persists; Trump reviews strike options; Israel raises alert and airport readiness.
 - **Lebanon:** IAF strikes Hezbollah weapon shafts; repeat hit follows LAF inspection that leaves tunnels intact.
 - **Gaza:** Hamas readies administrative handover paperwork; IDF removes threats after Yellow Line crossings in the south.
 - **Syria:** U.S. strikes Islamic State targets; Israel holds key terrain to block jihadist infiltration routes.
 - **Judea & Samaria:** Islamic Jihad claims Nablus shooting; Hamas terrorist arrested; soldier wounded; mixed ramming report still unresolved.
 - **Diaspora:** Mississippi synagogue arson suspect held; UK school blocks Jewish MP visit; intimidation incidents spread.
-

The War Today

Tehran Threatens Israel As Trump Weighs Enforcing Protest Red Line

Iran's regime has moved from "crowd control" to state murder under near-total communications blackout, with multiple streams of reporting and visual evidence pointing to mass fatalities across several cities and hospitals, while the death-toll estimates jump from the low thousands to far higher claims and the arrest count climbs astronomically. The blackout has now run for days, with limited leakage through satellite channels and richer urban pockets—then reports of active jamming to choke even that—shrinking visibility as security forces escalate live fire and centralize repression under the IRGC. Against that, Washington is openly weighing "strong options," including strike packages tied to the security organs running the crackdown and other Tehran targets—while also signaling it wants more time to position forces and harden defenses for an Iranian response. Israel has raised alert posture (including civil aviation readiness), and Tehran's parliament speaker has issued the predictable threat line: if America strikes, U.S. forces and Israel become "legitimate targets," with missiles aimed at Israel and regional bases.

ASSESSMENT

Tehran turned off the internet so the killing gets cheaper. They blame foreigners so the killing feels patriotic. And then they wave missiles so outsiders hesitate long enough for the killing to finish. The regime might be on its death bed, but the ayatollah has come back from similar sets of circumstances. The timing seems right, but Tehran will need a nudge if the regime is to change. Tehran believing it can buy breathing room by exporting fear—whether through missiles, proxies, cyber noise, or a “contained” strike remains to be seen. Israel’s job is to assume retaliation pathways even if Tehran is distracted, harden the home front, and keep freedom of action aligned with Washington without outsourcing judgment to Washington.

Lebanon Enforcement Hits Weapon Shafts As LAF Inspections Fail Again

Israel expanded routine enforcement strikes across southern Lebanon against Hezbollah weapons-storage shafts, underground sites, and other rebuild infrastructure, including repeat targeting of a site struck about a week earlier after the Lebanese Armed Forces were notified, inspected, and still failed to dismantle the terror infrastructure—prompting Israel to hit it again. Warnings were issued to civilians in specific zones before follow-on strikes, and additional action included the elimination of a Hezbollah operative tied to reestablishing military infrastructure. Local reports described Lebanese Army and UNIFIL moving into a warned area to try to prevent a strike. Alongside this, the U.S. carried out multiple strikes across Syria targeting Islamic State elements as part of a continuing campaign after an earlier ISIS attack killed American personnel, with roughly a thousand U.S. troops still in-country and the battlefield still producing jihadist output even under Syria’s post-Assad political “reset.”

ASSESSMENT

Lebanon’s “understandings” keep failing for the same reason they always fail. Nobody in Beirut is willing to dismantle the militia that owns the country, and UNIFIL can “deploy” all day without ever finding the courage to confiscate a single launcher. So Israel makes rebuild lanes perishable—again and again—until the lesson sticks. Syria is the same genre of problem: jihadists don’t ask permission, they fill vacuums, and they metastasize when adults pretend “transition” is security. The connective tissue here is doctrine. Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS—different branding with more or less the same beliefs.

Hamas Sells Technocrats, Keeps Guns; Shechem Shooting Shows Wider Contact

In Gaza, the “handover” narrative advanced even if the reality hasn’t. Hamas issued directives telling its governing bodies to prepare to transfer administrative authority to the proposed technocratic mechanism under the U.S.-backed Board framework, with the Board’s composition expected soon and Israeli insistence reiterated at senior levels that any transition requires Hamas disarmament and Gaza demilitarization. That said behavior remains the same as Gaza kept behaving like Gaza. Israeli forces remain deployed along the Yellow Line, and the Air Force eliminated an armed jihadist operative who crossed into the IDF-controlled side and approached troops as an immediate threat. Meanwhile, the wider contact surface stayed active beyond Gaza: during IDF activity in Shechem (Nablus), gunfire wounded a soldier moderately

and forces launched a pursuit, with jihadist factions claiming the attack. Just this morning the IDF and ISA announced they arrested the Hamas terrorists responsible for it.

ASSESSMENT

Hamas is trying to repackage gunmen as civil servants and call it “responsibility,” while keeping the only asset that matters—armed control. A “technocratic government” that won’t confiscate a rifle is irrelevant. The Nablus shooting is the same lesson in miniature: when hostile actors still have guns and space to operate, the war migrates into patrol routes, alleys, and response-time geometry. Committees don’t stop bullets. Control does.

Inside Israel

Readiness Cuts Hit The Periphery As Iran Clock Forces Full Alert

The defense establishment is trying to keep Israel on maximum alert for Iran contingencies while simultaneously making the cheapest, dumbest readiness choices at home. Dozens of 2026 training cycles have been canceled across roughly 25 units—combat and reserve formations across commands, including specialized tunnel-warfare engineering, artillery, trackers, border-smuggling interdiction, a Gaza Division unit, and even formation training for the new 96th Division built to prevent mass infiltrations along the Jordanian border. The cancellations are being justified as “planning uncertainty” tied to budget law politics and election risk, with the IDF warning that shortened drills alongside operational activity preserve only a minimum baseline and full annual training isn’t optional. In parallel, Gaza Envelope communities are watching the IDF scale back reserve-duty personnel for community defense several kilometers from the Strip as part of a 2026 reserve reduction plan, shifting gate-guarding and standby duties onto local rapid-response teams. One senior voice calls the risk reasonable given Hamas’s weakened posture and IDF deployment inside Gaza, while another—scarred by pre-October 7 “the fence will save you” logic—warns that “deep deployment” is not an impermeable shield against a small, suicidal terror cell.

ASSESSMENT

This is what “war economy” looks like when politics keeps interrupting planning: the country runs hot against Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas while cutting the boring muscle that prevents surprise, and then acts offended when professionals say readiness isn’t a slogan. Cancel training and you don’t get “efficiency,” you get improvisation—right up until the day you need the Alpine Unit on Hermon, Yahalom in a tunnel grid, or the Jordan Valley division to stop a mass infiltration and discover you saved shekels and spent lives. The Gaza Envelope argument is the same lesson wearing a different uniform: technology and distance reduce risk; they do not delete it.

Area C High-Rise Creep Near Jerusalem Tests Whether “Enforcement” Means Anything

A pair of unusually large, interconnected 12-story towers—dozens of units across roughly 8,472 square meters—has risen on the edge of a Palestinian

Authority village south of Jerusalem, adjacent to the security fence. It's close to completion and reportedly staffed daily, prompting a petition arguing this is not random real estate but a physical bid to establish permanence and extend into nearby Area C (which is supposed to remain solely under Israeli jurisdiction). The state's response was essentially procedural: it claimed enforcement had already occurred through a stop-work order, and the court accepted that posture and dismissed the petition. The underlying claim from the petitioners is blunt: stop-work orders get posted and then ignored.

ASSESSMENT

This is just another example of "facts on the ground" built fast enough that legal process becomes a spectator sport. If enforcement is real, you don't just staple paper to a wall—you remove equipment, you impose consequences, you prevent rework the next morning. Otherwise Israel ends up outsourcing sovereignty to whoever pours concrete faster. The security fence is a line that needs depth, control, and unapologetic jurisdiction behind it—especially around Jerusalem.

Qatargate Expands From Advisers To Narratives As Friction Grows

Alleged Qatar influence channels keep widening. A prominent political analyst-columnist was reported to have received large payments traced back to a Doha lobbyist via an intermediary—while publishing multiple pieces about Qatar, part of a broader "Qatargate" ecosystem already centered on Netanyahu-linked advisers suspected of foreign-agent ties and related offenses. Separately, protesters in Tel Aviv and outside a cabinet minister's home explicitly staged demonstrations around the same scandal, with arrests, public-order enforcement, and a pepper-spray altercation between a government supporter and anti-government demonstrators that ended with people from both sides detained. Meanwhile, Israel's electoral map keeps reverting to bloc paralysis: analysis points to two hardened camps with little crossover, a Bennett comeback attempt siphoning seats mainly within the anti-Netanyahu universe rather than flipping Likud voters, and coalition arithmetic that still struggles to produce a clean alternative. A recent survey shows Netanyahu's right-wing bloc holding a clear majority. Overlay all this with the government's instruction for ministers to remain available amid Iran-linked tension and a raised national alert posture, and you get a familiar Israeli recipe: strategic threat outside, procedural chaos inside.

ASSESSMENT

Qatar doesn't need to "control Israel" to harm Israel—it only needs to feed the domestic addiction to delegitimizing your own institutions. When influence scandals touch advisers, journalists, and "democratic protests" at once, the outcome is mistrust. Add bloc deadlock and you get the worst governance pattern: everyone campaigns and yet nobody governs. Law enforcement must treat foreign influence and mishandling of sensitive material as a state-level threat, not a partisan talking point and politicians need to stop acting like budgets and readiness are optional.

Israel and the World

Synagogues Burn, Schools Ban Jews, And “Tenant Rights” Becomes A Weapon

The diaspora picture looks bleaker in ways that seem “local” until you notice the choreography. A Jewish elected official in Britain was barred from visiting a school in his own constituency because his presence might “inflame teachers.” While the same ecosystem tolerates demonstrations outside an Israeli restaurant with rhetoric explicitly endorsing “resistance... by any and all means necessary” and chants that frame Jewish-linked space as fair game. In the U.S., Mississippi’s largest synagogue was heavily damaged in an arson attack, with Torah scrolls destroyed and worship suspended. In New York the new mayor tried (and failed) to block a \$451M bankruptcy-court real estate deal involving an Israeli-owned company—arguing the buyer lacks the capacity to rehabilitate rent-regulated buildings. In Australia, a large anti-Israel protest went ahead despite emergency-service strain from bushfires and after the recent Bondi beach Hanukkah terror attack—complete with “intifada” rhetoric and boasts about shutting down cities. Fortunately, some of the so-called Silent Majority might exist. Hungary’s chief rabbi describes a dramatic improvement in Jewish life and a state posture that treats pro-terror rallies as unacceptable rather than as “community expression,” and Dutch Christian supporters planted tens of thousands of tulips across the Gaza border region as a visibility project tied to rehabilitation—children planting roots where Hamas tried to rip them out.

ASSESSMENT

Institutions are frightened of their own staffs and street mobs that they preemptively treat Jews as accelerants and Jew-haters as weather. A synagogue burns and everyone waits for the “motive” like antisemitism requires a confession tape. A school bans a Jewish representative because the problem is “teachers’ feelings,” not teacher radicalization. City politics in New York tries to smuggle “anti-Israel” into providing affordable housing. Jews don’t need more statements. Jews need states willing to enforce order. When governments outsource courage to HR departments, mobs escalate.

Riyadh Hedges, Ankara Shops For Umbrellas, And Jerusalem Banks New Votes

Regional diplomacy is re-sorting under Iran chaos and U.S. uncertainty. Turkey is reported to be in advanced talks to join the Saudi Arabia–Pakistan mutual defense pact—an alignment that could, in effect, place Ankara under Islamabad’s nuclear shadow even as Turkey hosts (and underwrites) Hamas and pushes for a larger regional role. At the same time, reporting inside the Gulf arena describes Riyadh sharpening (in public and in private) attacks on the UAE as an “Israeli proxy,” while probing a softer line toward Islamist currents and courting an alternative “moderate axis” that pulls in players Israel has learned to treat as serial double-dealers. As Tehran’s internal crackdown

turns into external threat and Washington deliberates how far it will go, mid-tier powers hedge by stacking pacts and rebranding alignments, hoping paperwork will substitute for deterrence. Israel, meanwhile, keeps accumulating quiet diplomatic ballast: Samoa's leader has been invited to Israel ahead of a planned 2026 embassy opening in Jerusalem, with Samoan officials welcomed to advance the launch and the relationship framed around consistent support in international forums and practical cooperation.

ASSESSMENT

This is one of the region's favorite tricks—build “stability mechanisms” that let everyone avoid choosing sides and then act shocked when the same actors keep funding, hosting, and laundering jihadists. Riyadh's hedging and Ankara's pact-shopping are all about leverage. Israel should treat it accordingly: assume that any “new axis” is a bargaining chip and price it in operational terms—airspace risk, arms flows, proxy hosting, and the like.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- **Jerusalem Post:** Germany signed a \$3.1B contract expansion for Arrow 3, accelerating interceptor and launcher production and pushing the combined program past \$6.5B in value.
- **Israel National News:** Gazans reported that prominent “humanitarian” influencers ran online fundraisers during the war, staged distribution videos, and pocketed the money—with at least one figure described as Hamas-linked.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- **Times of Israel:** The terror-riddled UNRWA said a funding shortfall forced it to separate 571 ex-Gaza staff who left the Strip early in the war, after contributions reportedly fell below its operating needs.
- **Israel National News:** A commentary argued the West is already in a transnational war against jihadist networks and called for a unified doctrine—shared intelligence, sustained financial warfare, and penalties for states that host terror infrastructure.

Domestic & Law

- **Ynet:** A Tel Aviv resident returned from abroad to find two illegal Palestinians asleep in her living room, with police allegedly recovering cash, jewelry, and other suspected stolen goods from them.

Culture, Religion & Society

- **New York Post:** A vandal carved “Die Thieves” on a Manhattan library door hosting a Jewish exhibit and reportedly threatened an employee with the

same blade before fleeing. This is Jew-hate in its natural form: intimidate Jewish culture, then dare the authorities to call it what it is.

- **The Guardian:** A suspect was arrested after an arson fire heavily damaged a historic Mississippi synagogue, destroying or damaging Torah scrolls and forcing the congregation to suspend use of the building. When synagogues need rebuilding funds and armed guards, the West has already lost the argument that “it’s just rhetoric.”
- **Jerusalem Post:** A U-Haul truck plowed into a Los Angeles rally supporting Iranian anti-regime protesters, with police reportedly saying it didn’t appear to be terrorism and the driver taken into custody. Even anti-regime crowds now get treated as a public-order nuisance first, which is how violence gets laundered into “an altercation”—allowing others to end up dead before the state will act.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **LAF “Inspection” Loop Fails, Again** — Israel re-struck an underground Hezbollah weapons-storage site it had hit a week ago after the LAF “inspected” and left the infrastructure standing, alongside another targeted elimination in the south. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **UNIFIL Shield Theater Returns** — Lebanese Army and UNIFIL reportedly rushed into a warned strike zone in Kfar Hatta to “prevent” an IDF attack after an evacuation notice, with Israel striking anyway. This is how Beirut launders Hezbollah infrastructure into “civilian complexes,” then begs outsiders to handcuff Israel for enforcing reality.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Stabilization Force Volunteers Multiply** — Bangladesh told Washington it wants in on a Gaza “International Stabilization Force” concept. More flags on the map won’t confiscate a single rifle; it will, however, increase pressure on Israel to trade physical control for committee optics.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Trump Briefing Compresses The Clock** — Trump is set for a comprehensive Iran options briefing Tuesday as the U.S. military asks for more time to posture and Iran threatens Israel and regional bases if struck. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Blackout Deepens, Satellite Links Choked** — Iran’s internet shutdown has stretched into the fourth day with reports of Starlink interference and fewer new videos emerging. Less visibility means cheaper repression, more mass arrests, and a higher incentive to export fear externally to change the subject.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **IRGC Designation Pressure Rises** — Israel is pushing European counterparts to formally designate the IRGC, and political pressure in the UK is mounting for the same move. Legal labeling becomes operational leverage when the next phase shifts from statements to sanctions, seizures, and arrests.

Home Front & Politics

- **Civil Aviation and Cabinet On Alert** — Israel raised aviation alert posture and instructed ministers to remain available and avoid travel/unavailability as contingency planning tightens. This is the state quietly telling the public to expect disruption if the Iran decision window turns kinetic.

Judea & Samaria

- **Shechem Shooter Apprehended** — An IDF soldier was moderately wounded by gunfire during activity in Nablus, with a jihadist faction claiming responsibility and forces launching a pursuit. IDF and ISA forces arrested the Hamas terrorist a few hours ago. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Ramming Case Still Under Review** — A vehicle accelerated toward soldiers in the Haret al-Sheikh area and troops fired; the incident remains inconclusive as intentional terror versus other causes. Ambiguity is a tactic: it forces split-second rules-of-engagement decisions and invites “I didn’t mean it” cover stories afterward.

The next days hinge on whether Washington converts planning into action, whether Hezbollah tries to reassert “relevance” with a contained strike that never stays contained, and whether the West keeps treating diaspora targeting as a PR problem until it becomes a body count.

— Uri Zehavi · *Intelligence Editor*

With Modi Zehavi · *Data + Research Analyst*

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.