



Forensic intelligence for those who act.

READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

Friday, January 23

Davos schedules Rafah like Israel is a subcontractor. Iran signals it may try to shoot first.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE Davos is not just a conference. It has become yet another venue where charters, complaints, and reputational weapons get assembled into a toolkit for restricting Israeli officials and laundering pressure as “rule of law.” The arrest-filing is not about winning cases but rather about raising the cost of being Israeli in public—and teaching Western systems to treat Israeli presence as presumptively suspect. Israel’s counter is simple: treat lawfare as hostile action—pre-brief travel, coordinate legal defense in advance, demand reciprocal scrutiny of the NGOs running these campaigns, and keep making their funding and affiliations a live issue in allied capitals. Expose and disrupt the doxxing/complaint pipeline, protect officials abroad, and deny hostile networks the easy digital-to-legal escalator.

CLASSIFICATION

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THE U.S. has assembled real strike reach near Iran. Gaza’s “governance” layer is already trying to set timelines that ignore Israel’s red lines. Add a domestic crime strike and a fresh lawfare filing in Europe, and you get the same lesson across fronts: control doesn’t come from signatures, it comes from consequences.

IN THIS EDITION

Flash Brief	3
The War Today	3
Davos Builds A Gaza Board While Hamas Keeps, Well, Everything	3
U.S. Strike Package Near Completion, Israel Raises Full-Availability Orders	4
Inside Israel	5
Gun Flows, Extortion, And A Community-Wide Walkout Force The State’s Hand	5
Manpower Shortfalls Push Longer Service, Bigger Regular Units, And Haredi Reality	6
Herzog Signals Process Discipline On Netanyahu Pardon	6
Israel and the World	7
War by Complaint: Davos Charters, Arrest Filings, and Optics Warfare .	7
Briefly Noted	7
Diplomacy & Geopolitics	7
Domestic & Law	8
Culture, Religion & Society	8
Developments to Watch	8
Judea & Samaria	8
Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)	9
Gaza & Southern Theater	9
Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)	9
Diplomatic & Legal	9
Home Front & Politics	9

We're back on the East Coast and watching the winter storm unfold. We expect to publish as usual, but prolonged power or internet outages may interfere—meteorology occasionally outranks intent.

Flash Brief

- **Iran Window:** U.S. carrier group moves toward Gulf of Oman; Tehran issues trigger warnings. See The War Today.
- **Israel Readiness:** Netanyahu convenes a small forum; ministries order weekend availability; airlines plan aircraft relocation from Ben Gurion. See The War Today.
- **Gaza Lever:** Gaza administrator says Rafah opens next week; Israel ties opening to Ran Gvili's return. See The War Today.
- **Near-Border Tunnels:** Kfir and Yahalom dismantle a one-kilometer Hamas tunnel east of the Yellow Line. See The War Today.
- **Judea & Samaria:** Hebron Jabal Johar operation ends with 14 arrests and eight weapons seized. See Developments to Watch.
- **Home Front Crime:** Arab towns run a general strike over extortion murders as drone pistol drops keep arriving. See Inside Israel.
- **Lawfare Abroad:** Swiss group files a criminal complaint against Israel's economy minister during Davos meetings. See Israel and the World.

BELOW: Iran decision pressure and retaliation risk, Gaza leverage and tunnel reality, Turkish constraint moves, home-front enforcement stress, and lawfare exposures abroad.

When the U.S. finishes assembling reach, Tehran's instinct is to buy time with threats and "talks." In Gaza, the board can publish calendars forever—it still cannot and will not compel Hamas to hand over hostage remains and its arms.

The War Today

Davos Builds A Gaza Board While Hamas Keeps, Well, Everything

At Davos, the Trump formally launched the "Board of Peace" and signed an inaugural resolution aimed at Gaza demilitarization and reconstruction while also floating direct talks with Iran. The charter itself is written as a global "peace and governance" vehicle, with Gaza curiously not central in the text even as Gaza is the first test case. The board's structure is deliberately asymmetric. The chair holds executive power (agenda control, veto, member admission/removal, successor choice) with no stated end date; membership is free for three years while "permanent" membership is priced at \$1 billion—peace, now available in luxury tier. Attendance at the signing included a grab-bag of states (including terror-supporting states like Turkey and Qatar) while much of Western Europe declined to join, and Israel did not attend despite

senior Israeli representation elsewhere at Davos—an early signal that the board’s optics are running ahead of Israel’s operational red lines. On stage, the U.S. plan was presented as “no plan B.” With Gaza divided into zones and reconstruction to begin only after verified weapons removal and heavy weapons “decommissioned” immediately. They’re offering amnesty or “safe passage” for some surrendering terrorists and a pathway for some Hamas members to be integrated into policing. The technocratic Gaza administrator publicly declared Rafah would open next week in both directions. The board’s director-general claims that the board is working with Israel and the Gaza committee to accelerate the search for the remaining Israeli hostage—while Israel reiterated the line that Rafah stays closed until Ran Gvili’s remains are returned. Reality isn’t reading the paper though, and the field keeps speaking in tunnels and anti-tank missiles. IDF forces located and dismantled a roughly one-kilometer Hamas tunnel route only a few hundred meters from Israel—containing weapons and three terrorist hideouts.

ASSESSMENT

This is a familiar scam—one we talked about last month in The Jihadist Continuum. “Decommission heavy weapons,” “collect small arms,” “integrate some fighters into policing,” “amnesty,” “safe passage”—that is not disarmament. Not even close. At best it’s personnel management for a terror organization. Rafah is the last leverage point outsiders can’t sentimentalize away. Once it opens on someone else’s timeline, the enforcement burden stays Israeli but the control levers evaporate. The board’s internal design—single-chair executive authority, veto power, and a billion-dollar permanent-membership menu—shows that it is an institution engineered to move fast when Washington wants compliance and to move slowly when Israel needs coercion. “Palestinian police” built from recycled Hamas personnel is the kind of idea people propose when they don’t have more than just two functioning neurons. If the board wants to rebuild Gaza, fine—make it a sanitation and rubble management agency. The moment it starts to normalize Hamas as a political actor while the underground and the gun economy survive, it becomes the world’s most expensive way to fund the next round.

U.S. Strike Package Near Completion, Israel Raises Full-Availability Orders

The U.S. force build for Iran is now being described as nearing completion, with Israeli assessments framing any strike as dependent on decision and timing rather than capability. President Trump publicly touted a “massive naval armada” moving toward Iran as a “precaution” while repeating that “help is on the way” for Iranians—moral support delivered by aircraft carrier. The USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group has shifted into the eastern Arabian Sea and is preparing to enter the Gulf of Oman. Reporting also described a broader mix of Tomahawk-capable destroyers and submarines in theater with a large combined cruise-missile load, alongside multiple deployed fighter squadrons (F-35s, F-15Es, F-16s, A-10s) supported by refueling, ISR, and heavy airlift equipment added to the region. Britain announced fast-jet deployment to the region, confirming Typhoon fighters at Al Udeid in Qatar amid the heightened alert environment. Tehran’s response has been both threat and delay. The IRGC publicly warned its “finger is on the trigger” against the U.S. and Israel while Iranian officials simultaneously signaled

interest in negotiations—time-buying wrapped in menace—and Iran’s internal controls remain severe with national internet blackout conditions continuing into a third week, alongside reporting of increased violence against civilians and what may be resumed executions of protesters. Israel’s readiness measures tightened, as well. Bibi convened a limited-forum meeting on military readiness. Heads of government agencies and councils instructed employees to be fully available this weekend. The air force commander publicly stressed readiness for surprises and deep operations while acknowledging zero harm cannot be guaranteed. Unusual low-flying UAV activity was observed circling over central Israel for an extended period. Commercial airlines reiterated contingency plans to move fleets out of Ben-Gurion if instructed. And the government is expected to approve a reserve call-up framework of roughly 280,000 through March 2026.

ASSESSMENT

Washington is assembling the strike toolkit and the protection layers that keep bases, allies, and shipping from turning into a week-long fire drill—then letting Tehran test whether “talks” can buy just a few more nights of survival. Iran’s regime is doing what it always does when cornered: kill at home, threaten abroad, and offer negotiations as a timing mechanism. Israel’s is treating the decision window as live, treating “no change in instructions” as disciplined public management, and keeping the state machine functional on short notice—because if Tehran concludes a strike is inevitable, the cheapest move is to try to shoot first and call it deterrence.

Inside Israel

Gun Flows, Extortion, And A Community-Wide Walkout Force The State’s Hand

Arab leadership ran a nationwide general strike across most Arab cities and towns, expanding what began as a local shutdown in Sakhnin after extortion-related shootings at businesses into a broad protest against near-daily killings and protection rackets. Arab society closed shops and public activity, with a march planned from a Sakhnin mosque to the local police station and parallel action in the Bedouin south, including a demonstration in Rahat. Arab leaders pinned responsibility on the government, with Sakhnin’s mayor accusing the prime minister of ignoring appeals and warning that if policing does not change, mass road blockages could be brought to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. The national security minister ridiculed the strike, accused Arab leadership of standing with criminal organizations, and claimed “tremendous resources” and record arrests and seizures.

ASSESSMENT

The Arab-sector strike is not a “minority grievance.” When extortion becomes a business tax and murder becomes routine, and the government’s answer is to recite “resources” rather than ramp up enforcement, you get the only rational civic response left. Shut the economy and force the system to notice. Israel built fences for the last generation’s smuggling model, and now pistols and rifles are flying over them into the exact communities already drowning in criminal firepower. If the state wants loyalty, it has to deliver basic security—fast investigations, visible takedowns of criminal enterprises, and sustained disruption of the gun supply chain.

Manpower Shortfalls Push Longer Service, Bigger Regular Units, And Haredi Reality

The IDF is moving to reduce the annual reserve burden for combat soldiers to fewer than 60 days, with an internal goal of 55, after two-plus years of grinding reserve cycles and widening burnout. The plan leans on building out regular-force capacity, including the creation of a new “David Division” with nearly 30 new battalions intended to absorb security missions that have been dumped onto exhausted reserve units. The army says it is short at least 12,000 soldiers, argues that scaling an additional 4–5 battalions would require extending mandatory service to 36 months, and is also looking to expand the reserve pool by recalling 20,000 previously exempt reservists and raising the exemption age to 45. A legislative memorandum proposes making employer compensation for reservist absences permanent rather than only during an emergency period. Inside the IDF, the chief of staff is telling the Haredi public—expanded enlistment is an “essential operational necessity,” not a social experiment—while the government is expected to approve reserve call-ups totaling 280,000 through March 2026.

ASSESSMENT

Fewer reserve days only happens if more people serve, for longer, in a larger regular force—because math is still undefeated. The new battalions and employer-compensation framework are admissions that “volunteer endurance” has a large cost paid in divorces, bankruptcies, and units that stop answering the phone. Extending mandatory service is the state choosing to tax the compliant because the political system still struggles to draft the exempt. The IDF can reorganize until the org chart looks like modern art, but without a real expansion of the Haredi serving population, Israel is just redistributing exhaustion.

Herzog Signals Process Discipline On Netanyahu Pardon

President Isaac Herzog addressed Prime Minister Netanyahu’s pardon request publicly while at Davos—confirming the request is in motion and emphasizing that it must run through the Justice Ministry’s formal process of collecting views and recommendations before any decision. He acknowledged receiving a personal appeal from President Trump but stressed he cannot bypass Israeli law and regulations. Herzog added that, in his view, the case should have been resolved “amicably” because it is damaging the system, while also noting that the ongoing trial complicates the pardon question and that any outcome will be decided by law and his conscience.

ASSESSMENT

A pardon is supposed to be a constitutional pressure-release valve. In Israel's current system, it risks becoming yet another arena where every decision gets interpreted as factional warfare—and every foreign “nudge” becomes gasoline. Herzog's insistence on procedure is reasonable, but perhaps not fully inclusive of all facets of the current situation. The deeper sickness is that Israel keeps trying to run existential security files and core constitutional questions at the same time, with institutions that don't trust each other and a public that assumes betrayal before explanation. If Israel wants judicial reform and governance repair, it has to do it with clean hands, tight process, and zero tolerance for internal freelancing—because the enemy doesn't need to invent chaos when we manufacture it domestically.

Israel and the World

War by Complaint: Davos Charters, Arrest Filings, and Optics Warfare

Davos is being used as a stage to formalize structures that later get wielded as constraints. A Palestinian legal group filed a criminal complaint in Switzerland against Israel's economy minister while he is present in the country for Davos—another attempt to turn travel, investment, and diplomacy into legal hazard zones. The minister publicly and correctly dismissed it as terror-linked intimidation and said it would not deter him. Tie that into what we explored earlier with the “Board of Peace” and its charter signing tying “progress” to Hamas releasing the last hostage—signature theater that creates future leverage over Israel's choices. And it's clear the ecosystem of rhetoric and process as progress are continuing to converge at Israel's expense.

ASSESSMENT

Davos is not just a conference. It has become yet another venue where charters, complaints, and reputational weapons get assembled into a toolkit for restricting Israeli officials and laundering pressure as “rule of law.” The arrest-filing is not about winning cases but rather about raising the cost of being Israeli in public—and teaching Western systems to treat Israeli presence as presumptively suspect. Israel's counter is simple: treat lawfare as hostile action—pre-brief travel, coordinate legal defense in advance, demand reciprocal scrutiny of the NGOs running these campaigns, and keep making their funding and affiliations a live issue in allied capitals. Expose and disrupt the doxxing/complaint pipeline, protect officials abroad, and deny hostile networks the easy digital-to-legal escalator.

Briefly Noted

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- **JNS:** Vladimir Putin told Mahmoud Abbas he'll join Trump's “Board of Peace” and cover the \$1B seat fee by tapping frozen Russian assets in the U.S., earmarking the money for Gaza reconstruction and “Palestinian problems.”

Russia is trying to buy veto-shaped influence inside a U.S.-run architecture while daring Washington to unlock sanctioned money—because the Kremlin never misses a chance to monetize chaos.

- **Jerusalem Post:** Jared Kushner presented a six-phase Gaza reconstruction blueprint at Davos tied to Trump's Board of Peace, projecting \$25B+ in investment, new port/airport/rail, and a GDP jump to \$10B+ by 2035.
- **Jerusalem Post:** Donald Trump said he wants “total access” to Greenland as negotiations with the EU advance, framing it as access rather than a straight purchase.

Domestic & Law

- **Jewish Insider:** DHS said Columbia protest leader Mahmoud Khalil will likely be rearrested and deported to Algeria after an appeals court cleared the way to dismiss his habeas case, while NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani publicly argued he should stay.
- **JNS:** Texas Gov. Greg Abbott warned a Houston-area school district to cancel plans to host the 2026 Houston Islamic Games, citing alleged CAIR sponsorship and demanding records preservation and threatening state action if the event proceeds. It's a state-level escalation of the CAIR/Muslim Brotherhood fight—expect immediate lawfare, loud victimhood theatrics, and a paper trail battle over who's actually underwriting what.

Culture, Religion & Society

- **Forward:** A new study highlights that Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in the NYC area report stronger ties to Israel and sharper opposition to Mayor Zohran Mamdani's antisemitism than many Ashkenazi peers. Translation: the “anti-Zionism isn't Jew-hate” fiction collapses fastest among Jews who don't forget their family histories.
- **Algemeiner:** Qatar has used hundreds of millions in funding since 2005 to shape Georgetown's programs and campus culture, alongside data showing Qatar as the largest foreign funder of U.S. universities. Buy prestige, seed ideology, launder Islamism, build Jew-hate.

Developments to Watch

Judea & Samaria

- **Hebron cordon bites deep** — Security forces searched ~350 structures in Hebron's Jabal Johar, arrested 14 suspects, and seized rifles, handguns, and blades.
- **Jordan drone smuggling iterates** — A drone crossing from Jordan carried ten pistols, and the same platform reportedly ran an earlier drop that slipped through. Smugglers are testing persistence and response times; expect

heavier payload experiments and multi-drone nights feeding crime and terror supply.

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Damascus radar becomes a tripwire** — Turkey deployed an HTRS-100 radar at Damascus International Airport (about a 115-mile detection range). It's "defensive" hardware doing offensive work: pricing IAF freedom of action and inviting a choice—absorb new friction, or remove it before it normalizes.
- **Hezbollah "civil aid" cover frays** — The IDF says it eliminated Hezbollah operatives embedded inside rebuilding, welfare, and education frameworks across southern Lebanon.
- **U.S. Syria exit whispers return** — Reporting suggests Washington is weighing a full withdrawal from Syria. Every vacuum gets filled— in this case it would be by Turkey, jihadists, IRGC logistics.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Yellow Line tunnel work persists** — The IDF dismantled a ~1 km tunnel east of the Yellow Line with weapons and terrorist hideouts inside. Hamas is still investing in near-border subsurface mobility under "post-war" branding— regardless of what the board of peace might want to believe.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Iran strike window tightens** — U.S. deployments are described as nearing completion: carrier airpower pushing toward the Gulf of Oman, heavy activity at Diego Garcia, and UK fast jets deployed, while the IRGC threatens with its "finger on the trigger." **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Diplomatic & Legal

- **Lebanon talks pressure builds** — Reports indicate outside pressure for Beirut to enter direct security-political negotiations with Israel. "Talks" often function as a leash: freeze Israeli enforcement while Hezbollah keeps the guns.

Home Front & Politics

- **State machine put on standby** — Government employees were told full availability is required this weekend amid the Iran alert cycle. That's readying staff levels for a short-notice escalation window and rapid internal coordination under stress.
- **Betting-market leak triggers clampdown** — Israel is probing suspicion that Iran-related classified information was leaked and exploited for Poly-market wagers.

Over the coming days, watch for two tests: whether Washington translates capability into an order, and whether Iran tries to make the first move look

“defensive” by widening the map through proxies, cyber, or diaspora targeting.

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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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