

Israel secures record gas deal with Egypt and record arms deal with Germany; U.S. airstrike on another boat in Pacific kills four

Drop Site Daily: December 18, 2025

The Genocide in Gaza

- **Casualty counts in the last 24 hours:** Over the past 24 hours, the body of one Palestinian arrived at a hospital, while 13 Palestinians were injured, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health. The total recorded death toll since October 7, 2023 is now 70,669 killed, with 171,165 injured.
- **Total casualty counts since ceasefire:** Since October 11, the first full day of the ceasefire, Israel has killed at least 395 Palestinians in Gaza and wounded 1,088, while 634 bodies have been recovered from under the rubble, according to the Ministry of Health.
- **Death toll from winter weather:** A one-month-old baby, Said Said Abdeen, died from exposure to the extreme cold, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health, bringing the number of Palestinians confirmed dead as a result of winter weather and storms in Gaza to 13, according to the Ministry of Health. Other estimates put the death toll at 18, including five children who died of extreme cold.
- **55,000 families affected by rainstorms:** Nearly 55,000 families across Gaza have been **affected** by recent rainstorms, losing their shelter or having their personal property damaged, said the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The agency warned that a host of urgent repairs are needed as conditions continue to deteriorate, and added that aid groups are scrambling to provide winter assistance. It also noted that the storms damaged dozens of facilities specifically designed for Gaza's children, disrupting services for around 30,000 children.
- **Reports that six countries agree to join Trump's "Board of Peace":** The U.S. is telling interlocutors it has secured commitments from Egypt, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Italy and Germany to have their leaders sit on the "Board of Peace" that will oversee Gaza, according to the Times of Israel. The body is led by U.S. President Donald Trump and is supposed to oversee Gaza's postwar governance and reconstruction, even after Trump leaves office. Washington is also courting Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The Times of Israel noted that

“willingness to sit on the Board of Peace does not mean further support from each country is guaranteed.”

- **ISF will not deploy in western Gaza or confront Hamas, U.S says:** U.S. officials privately told participants at a recent U.S. Central Command conference in Doha that a proposed International Stabilization Force (ISF) would not directly confront Hamas, and would deploy only along the so-called “yellow line,” The Times of Israel reported. Washington pressed other countries to participate in the ISF, requesting them to send troop deployments, assist with policing and logistics, or provide funding. Diplomats party to the conference said key issues remain unresolved, particularly how the force would address Hamas’s weapons.
- **Azerbaijan will not join the ISF:** Azerbaijan does not plan to join the proposed International Stabilization Force in Gaza and also does not intend to sign the Abraham Accords in the foreseeable future, despite its close diplomatic ties with Israel, sources told [Haaretz](#). Azerbaijani officials were absent from a U.S.-sponsored preparatory conference in Doha and have privately cited unresolved questions about the force’s mandate. The decision appears driven by concerns in Baku that participation could jeopardize Azerbaijan’s relations with both Israel and Turkey, according to Israeli and diplomatic officials.
- **Qatar and U.S. to discuss phase two of the ceasefire:** Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani [said](#) Wednesday that Qatar and the United States are preparing to gather all mediators for a meeting next Friday to develop a framework for moving to phase two of the Gaza ceasefire, according to Al Jazeera. Speaking during a visit to Washington, Al Thani said there is an “urgent need” to advance the next phase and form a Palestinian civil administration in Gaza, and he warned that an international stabilization force mandated by a UN Security Council resolution must not “protect one party at the expense of another.” After meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio as part of the seventh U.S.–Qatar Strategic Dialogue, Al Thani said Qatar is concerned with repeated Israeli ceasefire violations, which risk undermining the agreement and placing mediators in an “embarrassing position,” he said.
- **Gaza militia leader says his group is supported by Israel:** A Gaza militia leader operating against Hamas said his group is funded and backed by Israel, acknowledging direct coordination with the Israeli military in an interview with Israel’s Channel 14. The leader, Shawqi Abu Nassir, said his militia receives weapons, supplies, and “security coordination at the highest level,” with footage showing his fighters operating in Israeli-controlled areas near the so-called Yellow Line, according to a summary of the interview by [The New Arab](#). Israel has reportedly armed several of these local factions, previously linked by Israeli officials to criminal activity and the looting of aid.

West Bank and Israel

- **Israel approves natural gas deal with Egypt:** Israel [approved](#) a major natural gas export deal with Egypt on Wednesday, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying the government signed off on a roughly \$35 billion agreement to supply Egyptian markets with gas from the Leviathan field, the largest such deal in Israel's history. The gas will be delivered to Egypt over the next 15 years by U.S. energy giant Chevron. Netanyahu said the deal would strengthen Israel's role in the region's energy sector and that about half the revenue would flow to state coffers. The deal was first announced in August but was delayed by Israel's energy minister amid disputes over pricing and terms. Egypt has not yet publicly confirmed the deal's approval.
- **Israel receives German military support in the largest ever defense export deal:** Germany has approved an expansion of a defense agreement for Israel's Arrow 3 missile defense system, Israel's defense ministry [announced](#) on Wednesday. The expansion brings the value of the deal from \$3.6 billion to \$6.7 billion, making it the largest Israeli defense export deal ever, according to the ministry.

U.S. News

- **Two U.S. strikes in as many days in the eastern Pacific:** Four men were killed Wednesday in the latest U.S. strike on an alleged drug boat in the eastern Pacific, the U.S. Southern Command [announced](#) Wednesday, releasing an unclassified video of the attack on X. The attack in international waters was directed by U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth as part of Operation Southern Spear, and it targeted "Designated Terrorist Organizations," according to the post. Wednesday's attack follows a separate incident on Monday when eight alleged "narco-terrorists" were also killed in U.S. strikes on three suspected drug vessels in the eastern Pacific.
- **Trump admin seeks 100-200 denaturalization cases per month:** The Trump administration [set](#) an internal target of pursuing 100–200 denaturalization cases per month, a sharp escalation in efforts to strip U.S. citizenship from naturalized Americans, the New York Times reported. The policy would significantly expand a rarely used legal process typically reserved for cases involving fraud during naturalization. Earlier this year, Trump said he would like to revoke citizenship from naturalized people he claims were "naturalized maybe through Biden or somebody that didn't know what they were doing."
- **Trump comments on the blockade of Venezuela, calls Venezuelan oil stolen from the U.S.:** Early Wednesday, President Donald Trump [said](#) the United States is enforcing "a blockade," adding that "we're not gonna let anybody going through that shouldn't be going

through,” and accused unnamed actors of having “illegally” taken U.S. energy rights and oil “not that long ago.”

- **House approves measure permitting strip searches of unaccompanied migrant children:** On Tuesday, the House passed H.R. 4371, the so-called Kayla Hamilton Act, which would allow federal agents to conduct invasive body examinations of unaccompanied children as young as 12 without a parent or guardian present. The bill cleared the lower chamber with a vote of 225–201, and seven Democrats joined Republicans to secure its passage. Read more about this bill, and the response to it, from our friends at Migrant Insider [here](#).
- **Former Biden regulator “spins through the revolving door”:** The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and other U.S. financial regulators have been sharply weakened in the first year of President Donald Trump’s second term, pivoting its focus from regulating banks to minting new ones with questionable credentials. The agency has granted bank charters to major cryptocurrency firms and has deepened the sector’s integration into traditional finance. Acting Comptroller Michael J. Hsu, who served under Biden, moved last week into venture capital, joining the firm Core Innovation Capital, whose portfolio includes crypto and fintech companies, creating what critics describe as a stark conflict of interest. Read more on this from The American Prospect [here](#).
- **Harvard seeks to discipline students for releasing Summers video:** Harvard officials [opened](#) a confidential disciplinary investigation into two students, Rosie P. Couture and Lola DeAscentiis, over videos they posted last month showing former Harvard President and former United States Treasury Secretary Larry Summers addressing his ties to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, according to people briefed on the matter. The inquiry is focusing on whether the students violated university rules by attending and recording a class they were not enrolled in, after the videos drew national attention and precipitated, in part, Summers’s decision to step back from teaching. [Read our reporting on the relationship between Epstein, Summers, and Epstein associate Alan Dershowitz here](#).

International News

- **U.S. will sell more than \$10 billion worth of weapons to Taiwan:** The Trump administration [announced](#) more than \$10 billion in new arms sales to Taiwan, including HIMARS launchers, ATACMS missiles, self-propelled howitzers, drones, and missiles, according to the Associated Press. The sales were framed by the State Department as supporting Taiwan’s “credible defensive capability,” while Taiwanese officials said the package would strengthen deterrence.

- **U.S. repeals sanctions on new Syrian government:** The U.S. Senate has approved the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act, clearing it for President Donald Trump's signature and formally repealing the Caesar Act sanctions imposed on Syria in 2019. The repeal is conditioned on regular White House certifications that Syria is combating ISIS, protecting religious and ethnic minorities, and refraining from unilateral military action against neighboring states, including Israel, and may be accompanied by further foreign investment and aid in Syria's new government, which has largely adopted a conciliatory posture to the U.S. and its neighbor, Israel.
- **More than 1,000 people newly displaced in Sudan's Kordofan in the last two days:** Intense fighting is [driving](#) new mass displacement across Sudan's Kordofan region, with more than 1,000 people newly displaced in South Kordofan over the past two days. Additional waves of refugees have fled West Kordofan toward Kosti, Al Fao in Gedaref State, and across the border into South Sudan, the UN reported. 9.3 million people remain internally displaced across Sudan's 18 states, alongside more than 3 million returnees, with aid agencies warning that assistance is critically underfunded and food insecurity worsening, according to the International Organization for Migration.
- **Power plant bombed in Sudan:** Major cities in Sudan, including the capital of Khartoum, have been plunged into darkness after drone strikes hit a key power plant in the east of the country, according to Al Jazeera. The facility in Atbara is controlled by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and came under attack by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Two emergency workers were killed in the attack.
- **Attacks on Sudanese health care facilities led to more than 1,600 deaths this year:** The World Health Organization (WHO) [reported](#) Wednesday that attacks on health care in Sudan have killed more than 1,600 people so far this year. 65 assaults on medical facilities have been documented since January, with 276 people wounded, including a recent drone strike on a hospital in South Kordofan that killed nine and injured 17. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk warned of an escalating crisis in Kordofan, citing at least 104 civilians killed in drone attacks since December 4, including an attack on a kindergarten and hospital in Kalogi that killed 89 people, among them 43 children. Türk said the killing of six UN peacekeepers could amount to war crimes. The WHO reported that more than 70 health workers and around 5,000 civilians have been forcibly detained in Nyala, South Darfur, where overcrowded conditions pose serious disease risks.
- **Israeli attacks across Lebanon:** Israel carried out a series of airstrikes on southern and northeastern Lebanon on Thursday. The Israeli military announced the strikes, saying without evidence that it was targeting Hezbollah military infrastructure. Israel has carried out near daily airstrikes on Lebanon despite signing a ceasefire agreement over one year ago. The

intense airstrikes on Thursday stretched from Mount Rihan in the south to the northeastern Hermel region that borders Syria, according to Lebanon's state-run National News Agency.

- **Cambodian fighters allege that Thailand is using chemical weapons:** Cambodian soldiers and police were wounded in fighting along the Thai border, and those attacked said they suffered breathing difficulties, after Thai aircraft dropped what they described as “poisonous” substances, Reuters reported. Thailand denied using chemical weapons and said the allegations were “fake news,” while Reuters said it could not independently verify the claims. Cambodian authorities have not provided further evidence or specified the substance involved.
- **12 killed at mining site attack in Nigeria:** At least 12 people were killed and three others abducted when gunmen attacked a mining site in Atoso village in Nigeria's Plateau state late Tuesday, Reuters reported. Locals identified the assailants as armed Fulani militias. The attack underscores the political insecurity in the country's Middle Belt, where farmer-herder violence continues despite the government's pledge to restore order.
- **Ukraine claims it controls 90 percent of Kupiansk:** Ukraine controls nearly 90% of the northeastern town of Ukrainian city Kupiansk after recent counter-attacks, Commander-in-Chief Oleksandr Syrskyi said Wednesday. Russia's defense minister disputed the claim and said Ukrainian efforts to retake the town had failed, according to Reuters. The competing statements come as Kyiv faces pressure amid U.S.-led efforts under President Donald Trump to forward ceasefire negotiations. A key rail hub in the country's east, Kupiansk is strategically and symbolically significant.
- **Bolivia's new right-wing government wants financial support from the U.S.:** Bolivia's new pro-U.S. government is seeking financial support from the Trump administration, including a potential currency swap similar to the one extended to Argentina, as it looks to stabilize an economy hit by soaring inflation, dollar shortages, and falling gas output, according to an interview with Foreign Minister Fernando Aramayo reported on by [The Wall Street Journal](#). At the same time, the government is moving to open the country's vast lithium reserves to foreign—especially U.S.—investment, reviewing deals signed under previous “Movement for Socialism” administrations for potential termination.
- **U.S. sends Air Force personnel to Ecuador:** The U.S. [announced](#) a temporary deployment of Air Force personnel to Ecuador's Manta air force base on Wednesday, as part of its regional anti-narcotics campaign, according to AFP. The U.S. describes the mission as a short-term joint operation with Ecuador's military to bolster intelligence and counter-drug trafficking capabilities. Ecuadorian voters, however, recently rejected a proposal to lift the country's ban on permanent foreign military bases.

- **Britain arrests protesters who use the phrase “globalise the intifada”:** Police in London arrested four people on Wednesday for “chanting of slogans involving calls for intifada” during a pro-Palestinian protest. The arrests came hours after British authorities announced a crackdown on protesters using slogans such as “globalize the intifada.” London Metropolitan Police Commissioner Mark Rowley and Greater Manchester Police Chief Constable Stephen Watson said in a joint statement that they made the decision following Australia’s Bondi Beach attack and an October 2 attack on a Manchester synagogue. “Violent acts have taken place, the context has changed—words have meaning and consequence,” the statement said. “Intifada,” which means uprising in Arabic, is used to describe two major Palestinian uprisings against Israeli settler colonialism and occupation. Wednesday’s arrests were made at a demonstration outside the Ministry of Justice in Westminster that had been called in support of eight imprisoned hunger strikers who were jailed over connections to the Palestine Action group which was proscribed in Britain earlier this year.
- **Greta Thunberg joined Kneecap in a charity run for Gaza:** More than 200 people, including Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, [joined](#) Irish hip-hop group Kneecap for a 10-kilometer charity run through Dublin raising funds for Gaza, with Irish President Catherine Connolly cheering runners as they passed the presidential residence, Sky News reported. Led by Kneecap member Moglai Bap, the charity run supported the Gaza “Food and Play” project, which provides emergency aid and psychosocial support for children, as participants carried Palestinian flags and chanted in solidarity ahead of the group’s second sold-out show at Dublin’s 3Arena.
- **Pro-Israel propaganda after Sydney attack:** Online pro-Israel content produced by creators from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has started popping up following the Sydney attack this week, with a Middle East Eye [video](#) highlighting Emirati voices recycling many familiar Israeli talking points, reframing pro-Palestinian chants as calls for violence, and casting the Muslim Brotherhood as the primary threat to the region. One UAE-based speaker claims that chanting “globalize the intifada” is “not chanting freedom” but “bloodshed,” and accused pro-Palestinian protesters of calling for genocide