



# Spotlight on Iran

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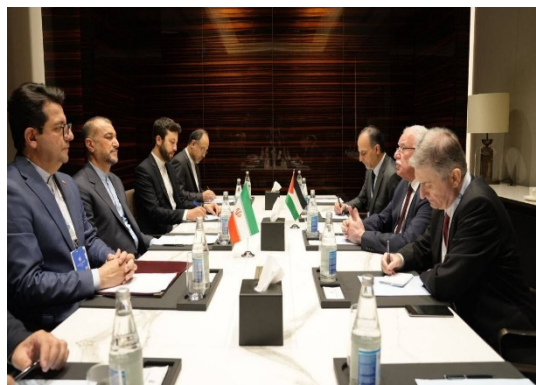
## Overview

- ▶ After the most recent IDF activity in Jenin, Iran praised the Palestinian "resistance" to Israel. A spokesman for the Iran foreign ministry called it "a new historic defeat" for Israel and the Iranian Tasnim News Agency, affiliated with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), claimed the results proved the strategic success of arming the West Bank.
- ▶ On July 8, 2023, the Iranian media reported the death of an IRGC officer . According to the reports, he died of wounds received in an undated attack in Syria attributed to Israel.
- ▶ A Syrian opposition channel reported that in recent months the IRGC commander in eastern Syria had been working to implement directives received from senior Iranian officials instructing the pro-Iranian militias to gain full control of the Deir ez-Zor district in eastern Syria. During the past two weeks the IRGC and the pro-Iranian militias in eastern Syria increased the deployment of their forces, possibly in the wake of reports that the United States and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) planned a military operation against the pro-Iranian militias in the region. In addition, a senior American military official told reporters that Iran, Russia and Syria were cooperating to pressure the United States to withdraw its forces from Syria.
- ▶ The chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces warned the Iraqi government that unless it met the deadline it had promised for disarming the armed groups in the north of the country, Iran would renew its military activities against them.
- ▶ An Iraqi delegation headed by the deputy chairman of the Iraqi "popular mobilization" for education visited Tehran University and discussed expanding scientific and cultural cooperation between the two countries and increasing the number of Iraqi students who belonged to the pro-Iranian Shiite militias.

## Iranian Intervention in the Palestinian Arena

► Nasser Kanani, a spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry, praised the Palestinian resistance to Israel during the most recent IDF activity in Jenin. On July 9, 2023, he tweeted that the "war machine of the criminal Zionist regime" had suffered "a new historic defeat" and an even greater defeat awaited its supporters. He called the ruins in Jenin "a shameful moral failure for the supporters of the Zionist regime." An editorial published by the Iranian Tasnim News Agency after the IDF activity on July 10, 2023, claimed that the most recent developments in "Palestine" proved the success of the strategy of arming the West Bank. According to Tasnim, the danger the West Bank posed for Israel was not limited to Jenin, and the successful arming of the West Bank would sink the "leaking ship of Israel" in the near future.

► Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein-Amir Abdollahian attended the summit meeting of the foreign ministers of the Non-Aligned Nations, held in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. On the sidelines of the meeting he met with Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki. Abdollahian strongly condemned the "air and ground attack of the Zionist entity against Jenin" and called on the international community and the UN to take immediate steps against the "Zionist entity's inhuman acts." He added that Iran had a long history of relations with Fatah and emphasized Iran's seriousness in supporting the "resistance" and the unity of the Palestinian factions' ranks against the "acts of tyranny and oppression of the Zionist entity." Al-Maliki said the "Zionist entity's" aggression against "innocent Palestinians" had no red lines (IRNA, July 6, 2023).



**The Iranian foreign minister meets with the delegation headed by the Palestinian foreign minister (IRNA, July 6, 2023).**

► Interviewed by the IRNA News Agency on July 9, 2023, Ziyad al-Nakhlah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) secretary general, said talk about the ties between the PIJ and Iran was nothing new, adding that all the "resistance" forces had excellent relations with Iran, which supported

all the organizations. He said they thanked Iran for meeting its commitment as a Muslim country to the Palestinians, and called on all the Arab-Muslim countries to follow suit and support the "resistance."

## Iranian Intervention in Syria and Lebanon

► On July 8, 2023, the Iranian media reported the death of IRGC officer Mehdi Akbarpour in Syria. According to the reports, he died on July 6, 2023, after having been wounded in an undated attack in Syria attributed to Israel (Tasnim, July 8, 2023).



**IRGC officer Mehdi Akbarpour, killed in Syria (Tasnim, July 8, 2023).**

► On July 6, 2023, the Syrian news channel Ayn al-Furat reported (July 6, 2023) that Hajj Askar, the IRGC commander in the Albukamal region of eastern Syria, had been working in recent months to implement the directives of senior Iranian officials instructing the pro-Iranian militias to gain full control of the Deir ez-Zor region. According to the report, Hajj Askar held a meeting with the militia commanders in eastern Syria after Iranian President Raisi visited Syria in May 2023, where he conveyed Iran's instructions. The report also stated that the Revolutionary Guards had appointed Hajj Hossein as the commander of the al-Mayadeen area.

► On July 8, 2023, Ayn al-Furat reported an IRGC transfer of missiles to Deir ez-Zor. According to the report, a truck carrying short- and medium-range missiles left the town of al-Mayadeen for Deir ez-Zor, and from there the weapons were transferred to villages where pro-Iranian militia headquarters are located. The website reported that on July 11, 2023, a delegation of Iranian commanders and a delegation of senior Russian officers had arrived in Deir Ez-Zor from Damascus and that local IRGC forces had been reinforced. It raised the possibility that the developments were related to reports of the intention of the United States and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to launch a military operation against the pro-Iranian militias in the region (Ayn al-Furat, July 11, 2023). On July 16, 2023, the IRGC-affiliated Tasnim News Agency

reported that the United States and the Kurdish forces in Syria (SDF) were deploying to attack the territories in eastern Syria controlled by the Syrian regime.

► A senior American military officer said that Iran, Russia and Syria were cooperating to bring about the withdrawal of American forces from Syria. Speaking to reporters, he said that cooperation, coordination, planning and the sharing of intelligence were increasing between senior IRGC Quds Force officials in Syria and mid-level Russian officers to pressure the United States to withdraw its forces from Syria (AP, July 15, 2023).

► On July 8, 2023, Hossein Akbari, the Iranian ambassador to Syria, visited the international exhibition for oil, gas and energy held in Damascus, and stressed the desire of Iranian companies to cooperate with their Syrian counterparts in the oil and energy industry. He said that according to the agreements signed during President Raisi's visit to Syria, the two countries undertook to expand cooperation. Several Iranian companies participated in the exhibition, along with several dozen companies from Syria and other countries.

► The Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization announced the renewal of pilgrimage flights to Syria. According to the announcement, beginning on July 18, 2023, Iranian pilgrims will be able to fly from Tehran to Damascus on weekly flights. Flights to Syria stopped after the outbreak of the Corona virus, resumed temporarily and on a limited basis last year and stopped again a few months ago. The resumption of flights was made possible following President Raisi's visit to Damascus last May (Mehr, July 18, 2023).

## Iranian Intervention in Iraq

► On July 8, 2023, Ahmad Vahidi, the Iranian interior minister, met with Abdul Amir al-Shammari, the Iraqi interior minister, at the Zarbaiyah-Mehran border crossing between Iran and Iraq. After the meeting, Vahidi said an agreement had been reached for the establishment of a joint security headquarters at the two countries' international borders to monitor the movement of Iranian pilgrims to the Shi'ite shrines in Iraq as part of the Arba'een Pilgrimage ceremonies in Karbala, Iraq (ISNA, July 8, 2023).



**Meeting of the Iranian and Iraqi foreign ministers (ISNA, July 8, 2023).**

- ▶ Mohammad Baqeri, chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces, warned the Iraqi government that unless it met the promised August deadline for disarming the armed groups in the northern part of the country, Iran would renew its military activities against them. At a conference of the commanders of the IRGC's ground forces, Baqeri said the border security situation had improved but armed separatist groups were still operating in northern Iraq and undermining security at the borders between the two countries (Tasnim, July 11, 2023).
- ▶ An Iraqi delegation headed by Seyyed Hossein Mousavi Bakhati, deputy chairman of the Iraqi "popular mobilization" for education, visited Tehran University and met with Seyyed Mohammad Moghimi, the university president. Also present were Elham Aminzadeh, the university's vice president for international affairs; Mostafa Rostami, head of the Organization of the Leader's Representatives in Universities; and a group of university lecturers. They discussed bilateral expansion of scientific and cultural cooperation and ways to increase the number of Iraqi students belonging to the "popular mobilization" (the umbrella framework of the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq) studying at the university (Tasnim, July 8, 2023).



**The Iraqi delegation at Tehran University (Tasnim, July 8, 2023).**

- ▶ On March 9, 2023, Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Hossein Abdollahian arrived in Syria for a visit. While there he met with members of the Syrian leadership, headed by President Bashar

al-Assad, and was taken to visit locations struck by the earthquake which occurred on February 6, 2023.