



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

September 25 – October 1 , 2024

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Highlights¹

- ▶ Senior Iranian officials continued to express support for Hezbollah and Lebanon following the Israeli attack on Hezbollah's headquarters in Beirut, in which Hezbollah's secretary-general and the commander of the Qods Force's Lebanon Corps were killed. The officials threatened that Iran would retaliate against Israel.
- ▶ The Iranian president accused the United States and Europe of lying when they claimed that a ceasefire would be reached in the Gaza Strip if Iran did not respond to the killing of Ismail Haniyeh.
- ▶ The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman claimed that Iran had no agents in the region and that the "resistance" organizations represented themselves.
- ▶ Another escalation in the conflict between the Houthis and Israel: Two ballistic missiles fired by the Houthis at central Israel were intercepted. In response, the Israeli Air Force attacked power plants and a seaport used by the Houthis in Ras Issa and al-Hudaydah. Senior Houthi officials claimed that five civilians had been killed and threatened to continue operating against Israel in support of the Gaza Strip and Lebanon.
- ▶ The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for 23 attacks against targets in Israel, most of them after the announcement that Nasrallah had been killed. The pro-Iranian militias threatened to escalate their attacks if Israeli military forces entered southern Lebanon.

¹ The weekly study includes the activities of Iran, the Shiite militias in Syria and Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen.

Iran's reactions following the killing of Hassan Nasrallah

► Senior Iranian officials continued to express support for Hezbollah following the Israeli attack on Hezbollah's headquarters in Beirut, in which Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah and senior IRGC official and Qods Force's Lebanon Corps commander Abbas Nilforoushan were killed.² The officials threatened that Iran would retaliate against Israel. The following are notable statements:

- ◆ Ali Shamkhani, political advisor to the Supreme Leader of Iran, paid a condolence visit to Hezbollah's headquarters in Tehran and met with Abdallah Safi al-Din, the organization's representative in Iran (ILNA, September 30, 2024). Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian also paid a condolence visit to Hezbollah headquarters in Tehran (ISNA, September 30, 2024).



**Right: Shamkhani at the Hezbollah headquarters in Tehran (ILNA, September 30, 2024).
Left: Pezeshkian at the Hezbollah headquarters (IRNA, September 30, 2024)**

- ◆ Iranian Vice President Javad Zarif and Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani arrived at Hezbollah's representative office in Tehran to express condolences over Hassan Nasrallah's death. Qaani stressed that Iran would stand by Hezbollah in Nasrallah's path until "the liberation of Palestine and Jerusalem" (Tasnim, September 29, 2024).
- ◆ IRGC commander Hossein Salami said during a condolence visit to the family of Abbas Nilforoushan that the martyrdom of Nasrallah and Nilforoushan would bring about a historic change in the Islamic world (Fars, September 29, 2024).
- ◆ Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with Hezbollah's representative in Iran at Hezbollah's headquarters in Tehran. He noted that the "Zionist regime" should be

For further information, see the ITIC's study from September 30, 2024, "[Israeli Attack in Beirut](#)"² [Eliminates Hassan Nasrallah](#)"

concerned about its future, making clear that Iran would continue supporting the “resistance” and that the final victory was near (Tasnim, September 30, 2024).

◆ Ali Ahmadian, the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, said the response against Israel must be “precise” and that a single action by the “resistance front” is meaningless. He noted that the “enemy” was in despair and would not achieve success through several “assassination” operations. He stressed that the victory belongs to the “resistance front” (snn.ir, October 1, 2024).

◆ Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said at his weekly press conference that Hassan Nasrallah had become a martyr but his legacy was alive and there was no doubt that the “resistance front” and the Lebanese people would mark “the death of Zionism and the liberation of Jerusalem” in Jerusalem. He noted that Iran had warned the international community many times that continuing the war against the Gaza Strip would increase regional instability and insecurity. Kanani said Iran was not afraid of war and would not remain indifferent to any harm to its national interests and national security. He stressed that Israel’s actions would not go unanswered (snn.ir, September 30, 2024).

◆ Kanani also claimed that Iran “has no agents” in the region and that the “resistance” organizations in the Middle East represent themselves and act in accordance with the interests of their countries. He denied reports that Tehran would transfer fighters to countries in the region, stressing that “they have the ability and authority required to defend themselves against Zionist aggression, and therefore there is no need to send forces from Iran” (IRNA, September 30, 2024).



Nasser Kanani

(Iranian Foreign Ministry's Telegram Channel, September 29, 2024)

► Before Nasrallah was killed, amid the IDF's Operation Northern Arrows against Hezbollah,³ Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's vice president for international affairs, wrote in a letter to Nasrallah that he saluted the organization's steadfastness in the face of "Israel's aggression" despite the losses and damage it suffered. Zarif appealed to international organizations to pressure Israel to stop its "crimes," warning that without action from the international community, the war would affect regional and global peace and stability (IRNA, September 26, 2024). Zarif also noted that Hezbollah can defend itself against Israel, warning that Israel has crossed the red lines and that the situation may spiral out of control (CNN, September 26, 2024).

Iranian involvement in the Palestinian arena

► Mohammad Bagheri, chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces, told members of the Assembly of Experts that Israel felt humiliated and defeated, and since it had not succeeded in fighting against the "Palestinian fighters," it had turned to committing crimes against defenseless civilians, women, and children (Tasnim, September 26, 2024).

► Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said at a cabinet meeting that the "crimes of the Zionist regime" were unacceptable and would not go unanswered. He added that historical experience shows that "freedom-loving movements are not destroyed by the assassination of their people, and dozens of others are waving the flag of justice and the flag against oppression." According to Pezeshkian, the United States and Europe lied when they claimed that a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip could be reached if Iran refrained from responding to the killing of Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, in Tehran on July 31, 2024 (Iranian president's website, September 29, 2024).

Iranian involvement in Lebanon and Syria

► Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York with Lebanese interim Prime Minister Najib Mikati. Pezeshkian said that if Muslim countries maintaining relations with Israel were to sever their economic ties with it, Israel would not be able to continue its "crimes." The Iranian president also criticized the political, economic, and military support of the United States for Israel, which he said enabled Israel to

³ For further information, see the ITIC's study from September 27, 2024, "[Operation Northern Arrows: Reactions in Lebanon and Insights](#)"

carry out its “criminal actions.” Pezeshkian stressed that Iran is ready to provide any assistance to Lebanon (Iranian president’s website, September 25, 2024).

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, speaking at a press conference during his stay at the UN General Assembly in New York, claimed that Israel was leading the region to disaster with the support of the United States and a lack of action by the Security Council. He said the situation in the region was unprecedentedly concerning and that Israel appeared to be committing “war crimes” which it carried out in the Gaza Strip also in Lebanon and strives to ignite fires throughout the region. He called for urgent intervention by the Security Council to stop the war and stressed Iran’s support for Lebanon and its right to defend itself (snn.ir, September 25, 2024).

► Iranian Defense Minister Amir Nasirzadeh visited wounded Lebanese in a Tehran hospital, saying that Islamic countries could not be content with merely condemning Israel’s “crimes.” According to him, they must expel the Israeli ambassadors and sever political and economic relations with Israel to put an end to the “genocide,” exert pressure on it, and prepare the ground for the destruction of the “Zionist regime” (Tasnim, September 26, 2024).

◀ IRGC commander Hossein Salami said during a visit to wounded Lebanese at a hospital in the city of Mashhad that Iran would continue to stand with the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and with the Lebanese people (IRNA, October 1, 2024).



Salami visits wounded in hospital (IRNA, October 1, 2024)

► Iran Air spokesperson Hesam Ghorbanali announced the cancellation of all flights of the airline to Rafik Hariri Airport in Beirut until further notice (Tasnim, September 28, 2024). The announcement came after Lebanese Transportation Minister Ali Hamia instructed the authorities at Al-Hariri Airport not to allow an Iranian Air Qeshm plane to land following an Israeli threat to hit it (al-Nashra, September 28, 2024).

Iranian involvement in Yemen and Iraq

- ▶ Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani strongly condemned the Israeli Air Force airstrikes on Yemen's port of al-Hudaydah on September 29, 2024. He accused it of destroying civilian infrastructure, saying the attack showed the "inhuman character of the Zionist regime." He added that the United States was directly responsible for the dangerous and unpredictable consequences of the continuation of "Zionist crimes in Palestine, Lebanon, and Yemen" (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, September 29, 2024).
- ▶ Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York with his Iraqi counterpart, Fouad Hussein, to discuss bilateral relations and Iranian President Pezeshkian's recent visit to Iraq. The two also discussed developments in the region, especially in Lebanon, and warned of their repercussions in the regional and international arenas. They stressed that it was necessary to unite efforts and coordinate positions among the Islamic countries to reach an urgent ceasefire in Lebanon (Shafaqna, September 26, 2024).

Activity of the Shiite militias

Yemen

The direct confrontation between Israel and the Houthis

- ▶ On September 27, 2024, a surface-to-surface missile was launched from Yemen at Israel and intercepted by the Arrow air defense system outside the country's borders. As a result of the launch, sirens were activated in large areas in central Israel (IDF Spokesperson, September 27, 2024). Houthi forces spokesman Yahya Saria said the Houthi forces attacked a "military target linked to the Israeli enemy" in the Tel Aviv area with a Filastin 2 ("Palestine 2") ballistic missile and another target in the Ashkelon area with a Jaffa⁴ drone. According to Saria, the two attacks achieved their goal (Yahya Saria's X account, September 27, 2024).
- ▶ On September 28, 2024, another surface-to-surface missile was launched from Yemen and intercepted by IDF air defense fighters outside Israel's borders (IDF Spokesperson, September 28, 2024). Yahya Saria claimed that the Houthis attacked Ben-Gurion Airport with a Filastin 2 ballistic missile at the time when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plane was

⁴ For further information on the Filastin 2 ballistic missile and the Jaffa drone, see the ITIC's study from July 24, 2024, "[Escalation of the Confrontation Between Israel and the Houthis: Background and Significance](#)"; the ITIC's study from September 19, 2024, "[Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis, September 11-18, 2024](#)".

landing. He noted that the Houthis would not hesitate to raise the level of escalation in accordance with the situation and participate in the defense of the Gaza Strip and Lebanon (Yahya Saria's X account, September 28, 2024).

►On September 29, 2024, in the afternoon hours, dozens of Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked military-use targets of the Houthi regime in Ras Issa and al-Hudaydah, in Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen. According to the IDF Spokesperson, power plants and a seaport used to import oil and transfer weapons from Iran for military purposes were attacked. According to the announcement, the attack was carried out in response to the Houthis' recent attacks against the State of Israel (IDF Spokesperson, September 29, 2024).

►The Israeli attack reportedly targeted a fuel terminal at the port of al-Hudaydah which was not attacked in the previous Israeli attack on July 20, 2024, as well as oil and gas tanks in Ras Issa, several power plants in the al-Hudaydah Governorate, and possibly the airport in al-Hudaydah. The CEO of the Yemeni oil company in al-Hudaydah claimed that the oil tanks in Ras Issa were damaged, but not substantially because they were completely empty. Sources in the al-Hudaydah Electric Company claimed that two power plants were severely damaged and that at least one of them was put out of commission (Israeli media, September 30, 2024).

►On September 30, 2024, Houthi armed forces spokesman Yahya Saria announced that the Israeli airstrike, which he said was carried out with American support, included 17 "air raids" against several civilian facilities in the al-Hudaydah Governorate, including a port and a power plant. He said five civilians were killed and 57 others were wounded. Saria stressed that "this criminal aggression" will not cause Yemen to stop their "religious, humanitarian, and moral duty" towards the Palestinian and Lebanese people," and that they would respond with "military operations against the criminal enemy that will escalate in the near future" (Yahya Saria's X account, September 30, 2024).



**The damage caused by the Israeli attack in al-Hudaydah
(Right: Yemen Monitor X account, September 29, 2024; Left: al-Masirah TV, September 29, 2024)**

► On October 1, 2024, Yahya Saria claimed responsibility for two Houthi attacks against Israel – a Jaffa UAV was launched into the Jaffa area (Tel Aviv), and four Samad-4 UAVs were launched at Eilat. According to Saria, both operations achieved their goals (Yahya Saria’s X account, October 1, 2024). The IDF Spokesperson said that on the night of September 30, 2024, the Israeli Air Force intercepted a drone over the Mediterranean Sea, dozens of kilometers off the coast of central Israel. It was not reported where the drone came from (IDF X account, October 1, 2024).

► Senior Houthi officials condemned the Israeli attack and threatened retaliation. The following are notable responses:

- ◆ The supreme Houthi council said in a statement that the “Israeli aggression” against Yemen and attacks on power plants were intended to increase the suffering of the Yemeni people and cause Yemen to deviate from its support for the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause, but this “did not materialize.” It was further noted that the “aggression” would not go unanswered and would only increase the Yemeni people’s determination to continue their position and support for the Palestinian people and in self-defense (al-Masirah, September 29, 2024).
- ◆ Houthi Movement spokesman Mohammad Abdeslam accused a new “Israeli aggression” targeting civilian facilities in al-Hudaydah to stop the support for the Gaza Strip. He added that “the Zionist aggression supported by the United States deserves condemnation and rejection,” and that the Yemeni people would not abandon the Gaza Strip and Lebanon (Mohammed Abdeslam’s Account X, September 29, 2024).
- ◆ Senior Houthi media official Nasr al-Din Amer claimed that the oil tanks at the ports of Ras Issa and al-Hudaydah had been emptied in advance and that an emergency plan had been implemented. He added that “the Zionists will never stop our operations and we will diversify them” (Nasr al-Din Amer’s X account, September 29, 2024).
- ◆ Houthi political bureau member Mohammad al-Bukhaiti said that the “aggression” against al-Hudaydah was “American-British aggression” and that “the Zionist entity is nothing but a military extension of it” (Mohammed al-Bukhaiti’s X account, September 29, 2024).

Additional Houthi military activity

► On September 30, 2024, Houthi forces spokesman Yahya Saria claimed responsibility for downing a US MQ9 drone over the Houthi-controlled Saada Governorate. He noted that since

the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023, the Houthis had shot down 11 such UAVs (Yahya Saria's X account, September 30, 2024).

► On September 27, 2024, Saria said Houthi forces attacked three US warships in the Red Sea while on their way to help the "Israeli enemy." According to him, 23 ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones were launched, and precise hits on the ships were recorded. Saria said this was the largest Houthi military operation carried out since the beginning of the war, and that it coincided with an attack on Israel with a surface-to-surface missile and a drone (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel, September 27, 2024). US Department of Defense spokesperson Sabrina Singh confirmed that a "complex attack" had been carried out, involving cruise missiles and drones, but noted that they were either engaged and shot down or failed. She also said no US military ships were struck, and there were no casualties among US service members (Department of Defense website, September 27, 2024). Commenting on the attack, two US security officials told CNN that US naval forces intercepted what had been launched at the ships and endangered them while sailing in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. Other Houthi weapons missed their target. There was no damage to the ships and no casualties were reported among their crews (CNN, September 27, 2024). "American officials" reported that the attack targeted the destroyers USS Spruance and USS Stockdale as well as the USS Indianapolis as they were en route to the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and that about 24 missiles and drones were intercepted (Fox News and CNN, September 27, 2024).



Houthi poster marking the combined attack against American warships
(al-Masirah TV Telegram channel, September 27, 2024)

Iraq

Attacks by the Iraqi militias against Israel

► This past week, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq issued 16 claims of responsibility for 23 attacks using cruise missiles or drones against targets in Israel. Six of the announcements were issued on September 28, 2024, the largest number since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip,

against the backdrop of the killing of Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah. On September 30, 2024, the first announcement was made of a combined attack against four targets in Israel (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, September 25–October 1, 2024, as of 3:05 p.m.). The IDF Spokesperson reported three incidents of interception of a UAV launched from Iraq over the Red Sea by Israeli Navy ships (IDF Spokesperson, September 25 and 29, 2024).



Right: Flags of Lebanon, Iraq, and “Palestine” on a drone launched at Eilat (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, September 29, 2024). Left: Drones launched at Eilat (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, September 25, 2024)

► A senior source in Kata’ib Seyyed al-Shuhada warned that they were preparing to escalate their attacks on Israeli targets deep inside the country with missiles and drones, which he said would be used for the first time since the beginning of the war. He added that the militias would also discuss the possibility of including American interests in Iraq and the region in the escalation, since he claimed the United States was “involved on an ongoing basis” in the killing of Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah and in the continuation of the “aggression” against Lebanon and the Gaza Strip (Al-Araby al-Jadeed, September 29, 2024). Hossein al-Mousawi, the spokesman for the Nujaba movement, noted that “the resistance still uses only a small part of its military capabilities in its confrontation with the enemy” (Al-Nujaba TV Telegram channel, September 25, 2024).

► Kata’ib Hezbollah spokesman Abu Ali al-Askari claimed that American and Israeli activity had been identified in Iraqi airspace and assessed that preparations were being made for a “Zionist” attack in Iraq. He threatened that in such a case, the response would be directed against the “Zionist entity” and the American presence in the region. He also called on the “factions of the Islamic resistance” in Iraq, which support “Palestine” and Lebanon, to increase the scope of their operations against the “enemy” (Abu Ali al-Askari’s Telegram channel, September 25, 2024).

► Ali al-Bandawi, a member of the Iraqi parliament's Security and Defense Committee, who belongs to the Alliance of State Forces party headed by Shiite cleric Ammar al-Hakim, threatened that Iraq was prepared to fight "Zionist aggression," as it had done in the past. He added that Iraq had known wars, including against the Americans and ISIS (raad_arabi X account, September 28, 2024).

Iraqi militias' threats amid the escalation on Israel's northern border

► A "source close to the Iraqi militias" warned that if Israel decided to "invade" Lebanon, the militias would intervene and attack the forces "after they have accumulated extensive combat experience and have missiles and drones ready to launch." According to the source, what is happening now in Lebanon was "expected" and "a ground invasion is part of the scenarios presented during the campaign, and the factions have made significant decisions in the strategic dimension." He noted that the militias are located in areas close to the Lebanese border and that "all options are on the agenda. Our brothers in Lebanon will not fight alone" (baghdadtoday.news, September 30, 2024).

► In another report, a "source close to the Iraqi militias" noted that the militias are actively present in three Arab countries and are prepared to storm Israel in the event of a ground incursion into Lebanon. According to him, the presence of the operatives in Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon is not secret and constitutes an important and central part of the "axis of resistance," and the operatives also participate in attacks against "Zionist" targets. He refrained from confirming or denying that the militia fighters are also in the Daraa Governorate in southern Syria (baghdadtoday.news, September 25, 2024).

► Hossein al-Mousawi, the spokesman for the Nujaba movement, said that any attack on Lebanese territory would be met with "a harsh response from our direction and we will spare no effort to confront the arrogant enemy." He said there was high-level coordination and that there was regular communication between the "resistance forces" to confront the challenges. According to him, there is a development in the attacks of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, which are aimed more at "selected targets deep in the occupied territories" (al-Quds News Agency, September 28, 2024).

► Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada secretary-general Abu Alaa al-Wala'i threatened that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq sees the UAE as "the front post of the Zionist entity in the Gulf" and that if war breaks out in the north, it will become an arena of attack (Abu Alaa al-Wala'i's Telegram

channel, September 26, 2024). In another statement, he also threatened to attack American forces at their bases in the Persian Gulf and outside it, as well as Israeli and American interests throughout the region. He stressed that the operations would continue until the “aggression” in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon stopped, claiming that “the militias in Iraq have the same capabilities as Hezbollah and the Houthis, and they have used only five percent of them” (Abu Alaa al-Wala’i’s Telegram channel, September 27, 2024).

► Abbas al-Zaidi, a senior Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada operative, said the Iraqi militias had great capability and willingness to support Hezbollah militarily and logistically against Israel in Lebanon and any other country that was a member of the “axis of resistance.” He noted that a decision to launch missiles against central Israel depends on the strategic plan and developments on the ground. Al-Zaidi warned that if Israel decided to invade Lebanon by land, the militias would reveal “big surprises” and open fronts in Lebanon, Syria, and even Jordan. He added that “Tel Aviv is not out of reach of the resistance factions” (Shafaq News, September 26, 2024).

► Sheikh Mohammad Kawtharani, the head of the Iraq portfolio in Hezbollah’s political council, reportedly met with Popular Mobilization chief of staff Abu Fadak on September 23, 2024, at the Popular Mobilization headquarters in the city of al-Kufa, Iraq. According to the report, the meeting stressed the need for the militias loyal to Abu Fadak to allocate about \$2 million to purchase Iranian UAVs for Hezbollah, and Abu Fadak promised to supply them to Hezbollah soon (raad_arabi X account, September 26, 2024).

► Kata’ib Hezbollah reportedly sent a truck carrying several drones and missiles from the Jarf al-Sakhr area, south of Baghdad, and transported it to Albukamal in eastern Syria through an illegal border crossing. According to the report, the militia intends to transfer the truck with the weapons to Lebanon (raad_arabi X account, September 26, 2024).

Militia attacks against American targets in Syria

► On the night of September 30, 2024, several rockets were reportedly fired at the US base Victory, near Baghdad International Airport. A “security source” said that the air defense system at the base was activated. No casualties or damage were reported (Saberin News and al-Hadath, October 1, 2024). The US Central Command (CENTCOM) spokesperson stated that US air defense systems had intercepted two Katyusha rockets fired at the base area. The Pentagon spokesperson said the United States would respond to any attack against its forces, even though it did not want war (Sky News Arabia, October 1, 2024).

►On the night of September 28, 2024, it was reported that an explosive drone attack was carried out against the American Koniko base, near Deir ez-Zor in eastern Syria. No casualties were reported (Al-Jazeera, September 29, 2024). Apparently, the pro-Iranian Iraqi militias were responsible for the attack. In response, American planes attacked militia positions in the Deir ez-Zor area that same day. Three dead and 15 wounded were reported (Syria TV, September 29, 2024). A few hours later, it was reported that “unidentified” fighter jets, believed to be American, attacked targets of pro-Iranian militias in Deir ez-Zor and Albukamal in eastern Syria, near the border with Iraq. According to reports, at least 17 militia members were killed, including Iraqis and Syrians (Al-Jazeera and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, September 29, 2024).