



Spotlight on Iran

June 19-26 , 2024

Editor: Dr. Raz Zimmt

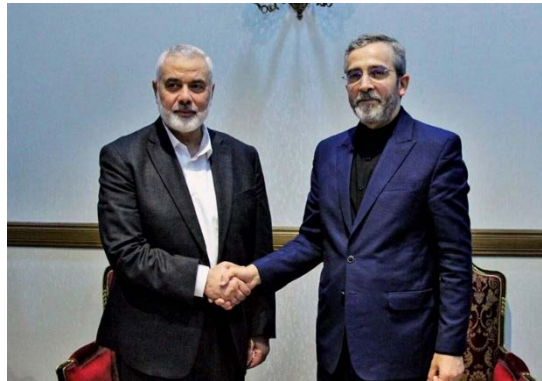
Highlights¹

- ▶ Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri-Kani visited Qatar and met with the Qatari prime minister and the head of Hamas' political bureau. Bagheri stressed Iran's support for Hamas and called for expanding the "resistance" to the legal, political, and diplomatic spheres.
- ▶ Against the backdrop of Israel's threats to initiate an all-out campaign against Hezbollah, senior Iranian officials warned Israel against expanding the war on Hezbollah. The Iranian ambassador to Beirut met with the commander of the Lebanese army.
- ▶ A Turkish news channel reported that Iran had recently significantly increased its support for the Kurdish PKK organization operating in Turkey and its YPG branch operating in Syria and northern Iraq. Support includes intelligence training, weapons assistance, and training in the operation of drones.
- ▶ The Houthis and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed joint responsibility for attacking ships in Haifa port and en route to Haifa. In addition, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for carrying out four drone attacks against Israel. The IDF intercepted a drone approaching Israel, and another fell into the sea near Eilat, with no casualties.
- ▶ The pro-Iranian militias in Iraq announced their intention to assist Hezbollah in the event of a large-scale war against Israel.
- ▶ The Houthis continued to report attacks on civilian vessels. The American aircraft carrier Eisenhower left the Red Sea after eight months.

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

Iranian involvement in the Palestinian arena

► On June 19, 2024, Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri-Kani paid a brief visit to Doha, the capital of Qatar. He met with Qatar's prime minister and foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, and discussed developments in the region and the Palestinian arena. Bagheri said the conditions in the region and the interests of the peoples of the region required that all measures be taken to stop the "genocide" in the Gaza Strip and support the residents of the Gaza Strip. He also met with Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, praised Palestinian behavior and discussed Iran's diplomatic efforts to support the "resistance." Bagheri stressed that the "resistance" should not be limited only to armed resistance against Israel, but should also consist of legal, political, and diplomatic resistance outside of "Palestine." Haniyeh said the IDF had failed to realize its objectives even after nine months of fighting and that Hamas would welcome any scenario that would ensure the aspirations of the Palestinian people (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, June 19, 2024).



Bagheri and Haniyeh meet (Tasnim, June 19, 2024)

► According to Bagheri, as the "Zionist regime" intensifies its threats, it will sink more and more into the "swamp of its crimes." He said Israel should know that it would never achieve anything through its "crimes" and that this would only lead to the use of new forces against it. He added that if the United States was serious about achieving a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, it did not need to support the side that started the war (al-Jazeera, June 20, 2024).

► At a meeting of foreign ministers of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Forum, held in Tehran, Bagheri said the "Zionist regime" was intensifying its threats and aggression against the Palestinian people every day. He said Iran would support any arrangement that would help

stop the “crimes” in the Gaza Strip and lead to the establishment of a ceasefire and the transfer of humanitarian aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip (snn.ir, June 24, 2024).

►Amir-Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC’s Aerospace Force, said at a conference on the Iranian attack on Israel on April 13, 2024, that over the past nine months, Israel had only succeeded in killing women and children in the Gaza Strip and achieving a tactical victory that did not atone for its strategic failure, and therefore its existence was now in danger. He said Israel had tried to atone for its strategic failure in the attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus but had erred in its calculations and assessment that Iran would not respond (Tasnim, June 22, 2024).

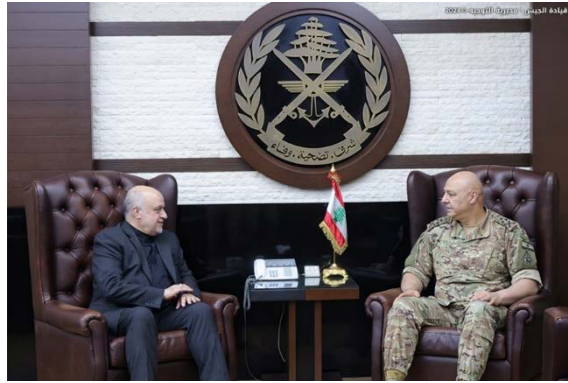


Amir-Ali Hajizadeh (Tasnim, June 22, 2024)

Iranian involvement in Syria and Lebanon

►Commander of the Iranian Army’s Ground Force Brigadier General Kioumars Heydari warned that the “resistance” would not remain silent and would respond strongly if Israel launched a war in Lebanon. He said the Iranian attack on Israel on April 13, 2024, had changed regional conditions and led to a new situation. He added that Israel had sunk into a swamp in the Gaza Strip and that its threats against Hezbollah were not new (Mehr, June 23, 2024).

►The Iranian ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, and the Iranian military attaché to Lebanon met with the commander of the Lebanese army, Joseph Aoun, and discussed developments in Lebanon and the region (Lebanese Army X account, June 19, 2024).



The Lebanese army commander meets with the Iranian ambassador to Beirut (Lebanese Army X account, June 19, 2024)

► Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon Mojtaba Amani said in an interview with Hezbollah’s al-Mayadeen network that the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, had shocked Israel and disrupted normalization plans and projects related to strengthening Israel’s role in the region. He added that the Iranian attack on Israel on April 13, 2024, was very important and gave the “resistance” groups great power, faith, and influence. Amani described the relations between Iran and Hezbollah as strategic but stressed that Iran did not dictate to anyone what to do because each of the “resistance axis” groups enjoyed independence in their decisions. He claimed Iran was not aware of the Hamas attack on Israel (ISNA, June 20, 2024).

► A Syrian news channel reported that the Iranian cultural center in Deir ez-Zor in eastern Syria was taking advantage of the summer vacation to attract young Syrians to the center. According to the report, the center has begun providing free educational courses to students in grades 7-9. In addition, the center approached university students to employ them for a fee in teaching middle school students and also offered jobs to young people in the center’s branches in the district (Ayn al-Furat, June 22, 2024). For years, Iran has exploited the socioeconomic crisis to deepen its influence in the civilian sphere, focusing on the lower socioeconomic strata. The Deir ez-Zor Governorate in eastern Syria has become one of the main focal points for Iranian efforts in this area.

► IRGC commander in eastern Syria Haj Kamil decided to establish an investigation and surveillance office to increase supervision of operatives of the pro-Iranian militias in Syria. This is part of precautions taken against the backdrop of airstrikes on targets of Iran and Shiite militias in eastern Syria from early 2024. The new office, which operates in Deir ez-Zor, is reexamining the personal files of about 1,500 operatives in the pro-Iranian militias, including their religious and political orientation, their relations with foreign elements or individuals

living outside areas controlled by the Assad regime, their ties with the media, and their economic situation and sources of income (Ayn al-Furat, June 24, 2024).

Iranian involvement in Iraq and Jordan

►According to a Turkish news channel citing sources in the region, Iran has recently significantly increased its support for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which operates in Turkey, and its branch People's Protection Units (YPG), which operates in Syria and northern Iraq. According to the report, six Iranian intelligence officers provide intelligence training to operatives of the Kurdish organizations in Iraq and Syria. In addition, the organizations receive weapons support from the Revolutionary Guards and the Popular Mobilization, the umbrella framework of the Shiite pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, as well as training in the operation of Shahed 136 UAVs (Türkiye Today, June 18, 2024)

►Jordanian security forces announced that they had located and detonated explosives hidden in a warehouse in a commercial area northeast of the capital Amman. According to the authorities, on June 22, 2024, another stockpile of explosives was uncovered, stored by the same suspects in a residential area close to a military airfield used by the US military. Jordanian security sources said the stockpiles of explosives were linked to Iran's efforts to recruit operatives, including to carry out terrorist attacks that would destabilize the country (Reuters, June 24, 2024).

Activities of the Shiite militias

Joint attacks by the Iraqi militias and the Houthis

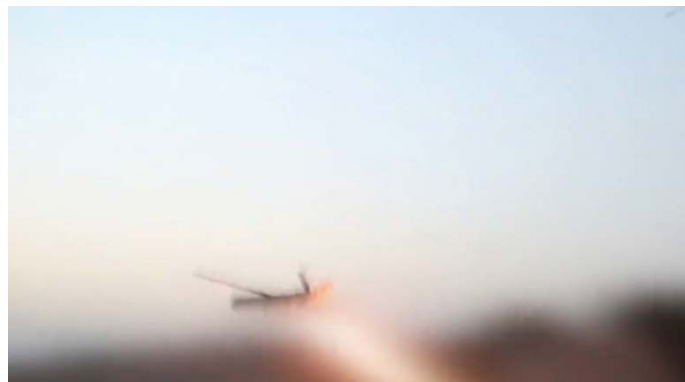
►On June 22, 2024, the spokesman for the Houthi armed forces, Yahya Saria, and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq announced the continuation of joint attacks against Israel. It was claimed that two drone attacks were carried out: against four ships in Haifa Port. It was reported that two ships were carrying general cargo and the other two were carrying concrete shipments and that they were attacked for violating the prohibition on entry to Israeli ports; a drone attack on the ship Shorthorn Express en route to Haifa Port (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, June 22, 2024). There has been no verification on the ground for the attacks.

Iraq

Claims of responsibility of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq

► The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for four drone attacks between June 19-26, 2024 (as of 13:00) (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, June 19-26, 2024). The targets of the attacks were the following:

- ◆ **June 23, 2024** (morning): A “vital target” in Eilat using drones. The IDF Spokesperson said fighter jets had intercepted a drone approaching Israel from the east. The drone did not cross into Israel. There were no casualties (IDF spokesperson’s website, June 23, 2024).
- ◆ **June 23, 2024** (afternoon): A “vital target” on the Dead Sea coast using drones.
- ◆ **June 24, 2024**: A “military target” in Haifa using drones.
- ◆ **June 26, 2024** (early morning): A “vital target” in Eilat using a drone. The IDF Spokesperson said a drone approaching Israeli territory from the Red Sea fell into the sea near Eilat. IDF forces monitored the drone and launched an intercepting missile at it. It did not enter Israeli territory (IDF Spokesperson, June 26, 2024).



Launching a drone at Eilat (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, June 23, 2024)

Support for Hezbollah by the Iraqi militias

► “Sources” in the pro-Iranian Iraqi militias and “Lebanese” sources noted that thousands of fighters from the militias would come to Lebanon to fight against Israel in the event of an all-out war. A source in the militias said they would fight “shoulder to shoulder” alongside Hezbollah. The sources claimed that advisors from Iraq were already assisting Hezbollah in southern Lebanon (AP, June 23, 2024).

► “Sources” in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq reported that Kata’ib Hezbollah (the Hezbollah Brigades) in Iraq and al-Nujaba (the Noble Movement) had announced their willingness to

participate alongside Hezbollah, if it agreed, in the struggle against “Israeli aggression” in Lebanon. It was also reported that the two militias had presented this position at a meeting held with Iranian Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani in Iraq before the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha. According to the sources, Bagheri had reservations about the participation of the Iraqi organizations in the fighting, seeking to avoid expanding the conflict at the present stage (al-Akhbar, June 22, 2024).

►An “Iraqi security source” said Kata’ib Hezbollah, al-Nujaba, and Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada (Sayyid al-Shuhada Brigades) were the organizations interested in participating in fighting alongside Hezbollah if war broke out against Israel, while Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq (League of the Righteous) was having reservations about it. The spokesman for Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Sheikh Kadhim al-Fartousi, denied that there were fighters of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq in southern Lebanon, noting that Hezbollah now had all the means to deter Israel (al-Nahar, June 23, 2024).

►Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada secretary-general Abu Alaa al-Wala’i warned that if Israel took a “foolish” step and started a war against Lebanon, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq would move to fight “at point-blank range” against Israel. He noted that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq was now participating in the battle of the al-Aqsa Flood from a distance of more than 800 km, but the geographical distance would be eliminated, and the resistance would use its entire military arsenal and hit with greater accuracy (Abu Alaa al-Wala’i X account, June 25, 2025).

►Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada spokesman Kadhim al-Fartousi said the militias of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq would enter any war that began between Hezbollah and Israel. He said the war in the Gaza Strip and the fighting in Lebanon were a war of one axis, and that Iraq was part of that axis. He added that the Iraqi militias were attacking Israel daily and that they sided with “Palestine” and Hezbollah in the wars (Shafaq News, June 23, 2024).

►“Sources” reported that a meeting was held in Iraq between senior officials of the Shiite Coordination Committee (the coordinating body of the Shiite parties in Iraq), the heads of the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, and a senior IRGC officer to discuss ways to support Hezbollah in Lebanon. According to one of the “sources,” the meeting was initiated by Hezbollah and a secretary-general of one of the militias suggested establishing a route for supplying Hezbollah with weapons, with one option being to use Beirut’s airport for quick delivery. The IRGC officer had reservations about the idea of the airport but expressed interest in establishing a supply route to southern Lebanon based on single shipments delivered by a single driver in a single

vehicle. One of the “sources” noted that Qais al-Khazali suggested that the best way to help Hezbollah was by attacking the American forces in Iraq. The “source” added that the proposal aroused disagreements among the participants, and the IRGC officer asked to wait for approval from Iran (Asharq al-Awsat, June 25, 2024).

►In light of the militias’ statements, a “Lebanese security source” denied that the Houthis or the Iraqi Kata’ib Hezbollah militia had a presence in southern Lebanon, saying that no operatives had been identified at Beirut airport, the only land border crossing, or the Bekaa Valley. The “source” claimed that all the reports were defamatory and fictitious. Another “source” stressed that Hezbollah did not need the support of any party and that it had all the capabilities to deal with any Israeli attack in Lebanon and that the organization could also initiate an attack in northern Israel (al-Nashra, June 26, 2024).

►Eight trucks carrying weapons are reportedly on their way from Iraq to Hezbollah in Lebanon (Wazir Iraqi’s X account, June 24, 2024).

Militia activity against American targets

►On the evening of June 22, 2024, a drone attack was reported against the American al-Tanf base in eastern Syria, at the border junction with Iraq and Jordan. According to one report, the drone came from the east, and air defense forces were able to intercept it. A “local source” noted that one UAV had been intercepted in the afternoon and two more had been intercepted in the evening and that all the UAVs had been launched from Iraq (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, June 22, 2024; North Press, June 2024). The Alwiyyat al-Waad al-Haq militia confirmed that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq had attacked the al-Tanf base twice (Alwiyyat al-Waad al-Haq X account, June 22-23, 2024). This is the first attack by pro-Iranian militias against a US base in Syria or Iraq since February 2024.

►The attack came three days after a special meeting of the Iraqi Resistance Coordination Committee, during which militia representatives discussed the “opportunity” they gave the government four months ago when they stopped the attacks to promote the withdrawal of all American forces from the country. According to the official announcement, the participants in the meeting accused the United States of wanting to continue ruling Iraq and warned that the militias were ready to bring about the withdrawal of American forces “using all available means” (Iraqi Resistance Coordination Committee Telegram channel, June 19, 2024).

►“Sources” in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq told the Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily al-Akhbar that the Iraqi militias had discussed the possibility of ending the truce they had given

the American forces about four months ago. According to the sources, they are considering renewing the fighting due to the “insistence” of the United States to keep its forces in Iraq, especially after the recent remarks made by President Biden’s nominee for ambassador to Iraq, Tracy Jacobson, regarding Iran’s negative influence on Iraq’s stability and amid the growing tension in Lebanon (al-Akhbar, June 22, 2024).

► On June 24, 2024, Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq secretary-general Qais al-Khazali threatened that US interests in Iraq and the region would be attacked if it continued to support Israel or if Israel expanded its activities in Lebanon and attacked Hezbollah. He added that the “Islamic resistance” organizations would spare no effort to support the Palestinian cause and the Gaza Strip (Qais al-Khazali’s Telegram channel, June 24, 2024).

► Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia’ al-Sudani is reportedly dissatisfied with the attempts of several armed groups to bypass the government regarding the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq. In addition, it was noted that there were moderate party leaders in the government who feared a regional escalation due to the tension between Israel and Lebanon (al-Sumaria, June 23, 2024).

Attack on militias at the Iraq-Syria border

► On the evening of June 21, 2024, explosions were reported in the town of Ashaer in the Albukamal region of eastern Syria, near the border with Iraq, due to an airstrike. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, drones struck hours after a truck carrying precision weapons had arrived at a site affiliated with pro-Iranian militias. At least three people were killed in the airstrike, including two Iraqi civilians affiliated with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, June 22, 2024).

► Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada announced that its operative, Abdullah Razzaq al-Safi, had been killed in an “American” airstrike. The militia secretary-general Abu Alaa al-Wala’i attended al-Safi’s funeral (Saberin News Telegram channel, June 22, 2024).



Right: Abdullah Razzaq al-Safi; Left: Al-Safi's funeral attended by the militia secretary-general (Saberin News Telegram channel affiliated with the militias in Iraq, June 22, 2024)

- ▶Kata'ib Hezbollah issued a statement accusing the United States of attacking Albukamal and saying it was a continuation of the Americans' "criminal approach" towards Iraq (Kata'ib Hezbollah Telegram channel, June 22, 2024). The US-led international coalition denied that its forces had attacked on the Syrian-Iraqi border (Operation Inherent Resolve X account, June 22, 2024).
- ▶Al-Nujaba (the Noble Movement) said that "this attack and the American terrorist actions" that preceded it justified the Islamic "resistance." The movement's statement added that "the work of the military jihad" was the only solution that limited and ended the "occupation" (Saberin News, June 23, 2024).

Yemen

Anti-vessel activity

- ▶Over the past week, the Houthis continued to report attacks against civilian vessels. Houthi Armed Forces spokesman Yahya Saria reported on the attacks (Yahya Saria's X account, June 19-26, 2024):
 - ◆ June 22, 2024: An attack in the Arabian Sea against the ship Transworld Navigator using ballistic missiles. It was claimed that there was a direct hit; An attack in the northern Red Sea against the American aircraft carrier Eisenhower using ballistic missiles and cruise missiles. It was claimed that the objectives were "successfully achieved." US officials said the claims about the attack were false (Reuters, June 22, 2024).
 - ◆ June 23, 2024: Attack in the Indian Ocean against the ship STOLT SEQUOIA using cruise missiles. It was claimed that the objectives were "successfully achieved." There has been no verification of the attack; Another attack against the Transworld Navigator in the Red Sea using an unmanned surface vehicle (USV). The US Central Command (CENTCOM) said the ship was hit by a drone. The crew reported minor injuries and moderate damage to

the ship, but it continued on its way to Egypt. This was the fourth Houthi attack on the ship (CENTCOM X account, June 24, 2024).

◆ June 25, 2024: An attack in the Arabian Sea against the Israeli ship MSC SARAH V using a “new” ballistic missile that entered service after successfully completing the testing phase. According to Saria, the hits were precise and direct, and the missile proved its improved ability to hit targets more accurately and at a longer range. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) confirmed that the crew of MSC SARAH V had reported an explosion in the vicinity of the ship. There were no casualties or damage, and the ship continued on its course (UKMTO X account, June 24, 2024).

►CENTCOM reported that this week, its forces had intercepted nine USVs and two UAVs in the Red Sea. In addition, three ballistic missiles were launched at the Gulf of Aden. There were no casualties or significant damage. At the same time, during the past week, coalition forces carried out airstrikes against Houthi targets in Yemeni territory, including command and control posts (CENTCOM X account, June 19-26, 2024).

►UKMTO said it received a report from the crew of a ship that was attacked in the area between the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea that water was penetrating the hull and that it had been forced to abandon it. The agency reported that the crew was evacuated by another ship, while the damaged ship was swept away in the Indian Ocean (UKMTO X account, June 23, 2024). No further details were provided regarding the identity of the ship that was hit. The attack allegedly took place in an area significantly far from the areas where most of the Houthi attacks are carried out, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

►The US Department of Defense announced that the aircraft carrier Eisenhower and its battle group had left the Red Sea region, where they had been stationed since November 2023 to fight Houthi attacks, and would return to the US after a brief stay in the Mediterranean “to protect the interests of the United States and its allies.” The aircraft carrier Roosevelt will reach the Red Sea region after completing a planned exercise in the Indo-Pacific region (US Department of Defense website, June 24, 2024). The spokesman for the Houthi military forces, Yahya Saria, claimed that the aircraft carrier was forced to withdraw due to the Houthi attacks against it in the Red Sea recently (Yahya Saria’s Telegram channel, June 23, 2024). Houthi Political Council member Mohammad Ali al-Houthi warned that just as the Eisenhower’s crew declared that the Red Sea was not a “picnic,” so too the soldiers of the aircraft carrier Roosevelt had to understand that the time for leisure and picnicking had passed and that the only way to enjoy

these hobbies was on the beaches of California (Mohammed Ali al-Houthi's X account, June 23, 2024).

Documentation of the attack on the Tutor

►On June 19, 2024, Houthi forces released a video that they claimed documented two attacks on the M/V Tutor. The ship was hit on June 12, 2024. One crew member was killed. The ship is believed to have sunk after the crew was evacuated. According to the Houthis, several naval weapons were used in the attack, including weapons that were first put into operation. In a statement accompanying the video, the Houthis threatened that they would not hesitate to use all the means and naval weapons at their disposal to support the Gaza Strip and that any attack by the United States and Britain would be met with a stronger and more destructive response (Houthi forces X account, June 19, 2024).

►Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi said in his weekly speech that the Houthi forces had hit the ship with a USV. The forces then managed to board the ship, booby-trapped, and blew it up (Houthi forces X account, June 20, 2024).



The M/V Tutor being hit (Houthi forces X account, June 19, 2024)

Houthi armament efforts

►On June 21, 2024, the Houthis unveiled the Tufan-1, a remote-controlled water drone allegedly used to attack the M/V Tutor. The video shows the water drone with a human operator on it, and in another clip, it is seen operating remotely until it hits a training target and blows it up. According to the data appearing in the video, the vessel contains an explosive charge of 150 kg. It is manufactured by the Houthis in Yemen and is claimed to have stealth capabilities (Yahya Saria's X account, June 21, 2024).



Right: Operator sailing the Tufan-1; left: Tufan-1 data (Yahya Saria's X account, June 21, 2024)

►The Houthi forces released another video showing new advanced water drones – the Tufan-2, which can carry 400 kg of explosives; the Tufan-3, which can carry half a ton of explosives; the Asef-2, designed for reconnaissance and intelligence missions and capable of disrupting radars. Another vessel is the Asef-3, which is designed for six crew members and allows them to intercept vessels. The video also showed the Masjour-1 naval mine, which weighs 900 kg and contains half a ton of explosives, and the Masjour-2 mine, which weighs a ton and contains 740 kg of explosives (Yahya Saria's X account, June 21, 2024).



Right: Tufan-2 data; Left: Asef-3 data (Houthi forces Telegram channel, June 21, 2024)

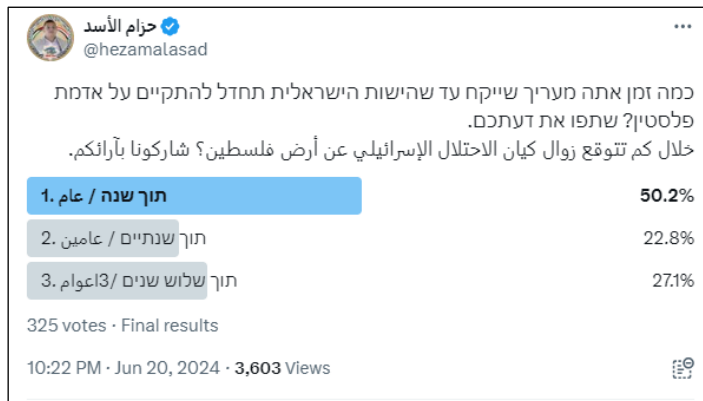
Statements by senior Houthi officials

►Houthi movement spokesman Mohammed Abdeslam claimed that the United States had conveyed messages through intermediaries that it did not want to expand the conflict and did not want the Houthis to support the Gaza Strip. According to Abdeslam, they answered that those who did not want to expand the conflict had to stop the “Zionist arrogance” and that they would stop the attacks only when the war in the Gaza Strip ended. He added that the cooperation between the “fronts of support” for the Gaza Strip was intended to increase the

pressure on Israel and that it was not inconceivable that there would be joint operations (al-Mayadeen, June 20, 2024).

►Houthi Political Council member Hezam al-Asad said operations in the Red Sea would continue at a “high pace” as long as Israel’s “aggression” in the Gaza Strip continued. He added that the Houthis had many more “surprises” and that their leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi would soon announce the opening of the fifth phase of activities in support of the Gaza Strip (al-Arabi, June 20, 2024).

►During the past week, Houthi Political Council member Hezam al-Asad issued several posts in Hebrew. Among those posts (as they originally appeared): “Is the Israeli entity on the verge of suicide?”; (Along with the video of the attack on the M/V Tutor), “This is the power of Allah, the mighty and the avenging. You will sink like these ships are sinking at sea, in support and assistance to our oppressed brothers and people in Gaza.” “How long do you estimate it will take for the Israeli entity to cease to exist on the land of Palestine? Share your opinion” (with a survey suggesting the following answers: within one year, within two years, within three years) (Hezam al-Asad’s X account, June 19-24, 2024).



Hebrew posts by Hezam al-Asad (Hezam al-Asad’s X account, June 19-24, 2024)