



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

October 30 – November 6, 2024

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Highlights¹

- ▶ This week, threats from senior Iranian officials intensified in response to Israel's strike on Iran on October 26, 2024. The Iranian Supreme Leader declared that the United States and Israel would face a crushing response for their actions against Iran and the "resistance front." Senior IRGC officials stressed that Iran's response is certain and will be decisive. The Iranian president said his country would respond to the attack, but if Israel agrees to a ceasefire, it may influence the nature and severity of the response.
- ▶ Iranian Foreign Minister Araghchi spoke by phone with his counterparts in Qatar and Egypt and discussed the continued efforts to establish a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon.
- ▶ The Qods Force commander sent a letter to Hezbollah's incoming secretary-general, Naim Qassem, stressing Iran's support for the organization. A ceremony marking 40 days since the deaths of Hassan Nasrallah and senior IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan was held in Tehran.
- ▶ The Islamic Resistance in Iraq issued 33 claims of responsibility for attacks against targets in Israel. The Saraya Awliya al-Dam militia claimed responsibility for four more attacks. The IDF Spokesperson announced the interception of more than ten drones, with no casualties. Senior militia officials announced that they would escalate the attacks against Israel and expressed support for an Iranian response from Iraqi territory as well.
- ▶ An Iraqi militia released a video threatening that its operatives in the Golan Heights would invade Israeli communities.
- ▶ The Houthis threatened to continue their attacks against vessels in the Red Sea despite attempts by shipping companies to conceal their alleged ties to Israel. It is claimed that the

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

Houthis are earning \$180 million per month from bribes paid by companies trying to prevent damage to their vessels.

Iran's threats to retaliate against Israel

► Senior Iranian regime officials continued to threaten that Tehran would retaliate forcefully against Israel following the Israeli attack on Iran on the night of October 25-26, 2024. The following are notable statements:

- ◆ In a meeting with students on the anniversary of the takeover of the US embassy in Tehran, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said Iran is doing everything necessary to confront “arrogance” (i.e., the West) militarily, in terms of weaponry, and in political actions. Khamenei noted that Iran’s actions are not merely about revenge but are logical measures in line with religion, morality, Islamic law, and international law and that Iran and its leaders will not hesitate on this matter. He emphasized that the enemies, including the US and the “Zionist regime,” should know they will face a crushing response to their actions against Iran and the “resistance front” (Supreme Leader’s website, November 2, 2024).
- ◆ Khamenei met with the families of the Iranian army personnel killed in the Israeli strike on October 26, 2024, and told them that all shaheeds hold a special status, but the shaheeds killed in the attack hold a particularly important status due to their defense of the country and nation in direct confrontation with the “Zionist regime,” which is the most bitter enemy of Islam (Tasnim, November 3, 2024).



The Supreme Leader meets with the families of those killed in the Israeli attack (Tasnim, November 3, 2024)

- ◆ Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said at the weekly cabinet meeting that all the countries in the region now understand that Iran seeks peace and stability in the region, while the “Zionist regime,” supported by the United States and Western countries, is interested in escalating the crisis and war. He noted that Iran would not allow any

violation of its sovereignty and security to go unanswered, adding that the leaders of the “Zionist regime” know well that if they make a mistake against Iran, they will face a crushing response, and if they reconsider their conduct, agree to a ceasefire, and stop killing innocents in the region, it may influence the nature and severity of Iran’s response (Tasnim, November 3, 2024).

◆ IRGC commander Hossein Salami said the Israelis believe they can change history by launching a few missiles, but the “Zionist regime” has reached the point of collapse and is acting blindly and without rules and committing every possible crime. He said the Zionists had made a mistake and that Iran’s response to the Israeli attack would be beyond imagination (al-Alam, October 31, 2024).

◆ Esmail Kowsari, a member of the Majles National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said that all members of the Supreme National Security Council had agreed on a military response against Israel and that the military response would be carried out in cooperation with the “resistance forces” and would be harsher than the Iranian attack on Israel on October 1, 2024. He said the timing and manner of the response had not yet been determined, and that the Iranian armed forces were formulating the response plan and it would be carried out in coordination with the “resistance forces” in the region (Dideban website, November 2, 2024).

◆ IRGC spokesman Ali Mohammad Naeini declared that Iran’s response to the Israeli attack would be certain, decisive, and beyond what the enemy could imagine. He noted that the “Zionist regime” had miscalculated that Iran would not respond to the attack and that it feared war. He added that the two Iranian attacks on Israel (on April 13, 2024, and October 1, 2024) proved that it was not afraid of direct confrontation and that it was using its military power well to punish the “aggressor,” and that from now on Iran would always use the element of surprise in its actions against the “Zionists” (Fars, November 2, 2024).

Iranian involvement in the Palestinian arena

► On October 30, 2024, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held separate talks with Qatar’s prime minister and foreign minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani and with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty. They discussed regional developments and efforts to establish a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, October 30, 2024). On November 4, 2024, Araghchi spoke again with his Egyptian counterpart

to discuss Egyptian, Qatari, and American efforts to reach a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip (al-Qahera, November 4, 2024).

►Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei declared that the “resistance front” would defeat the “evil front” behind Israel. He noted that the “Zionist regime” had been defeated because it thought it could easily eliminate the “resistance” groups, but the “resistance front” continues to struggle today with the same strength and determination. It does so despite tens of thousands of shaheeds and the deaths of some of its most prominent leaders, and despite American support for Israel (Tasnim, October 31, 2024).

►Kamal Kharrazi, the head of Iran’s Strategic Council on Foreign Policy, said Iran is not interfering in negotiations for a ceasefire in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. According to him, the matter is the responsibility of “Palestine” and Lebanon, and Iran supports any decision they will make. Referring to the Israeli attack on Iran, Kharrazi said that the attack was disproportionate and that Iran would respond with certainty at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner. He noted that Israel had repeatedly erred in its judgment from the beginning of the war: it believed it could eliminate Hamas by attacking the Gaza Strip, eliminate Hezbollah by attacking Lebanon, and dismantle Hamas and Hezbollah by targeting their leaders, but Hamas and Hezbollah will continue to operate with full strength (al-Mayadeen, November 1, 2024).



Kamal Kharrazi (Tasnim, November 1, 2024)

►Iranian Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib visited Hamas offices in Tehran to express condolences over the death of Yahya Sinwar, head of the movement’s political bureau. Khatib stressed that the blood of the shaheeds Ismail Haniyeh, Nasrallah, Hashem Safi al-Din, and Sinwar is the fuel for the battle of liberation and the removal of oppression from the peoples of the region. He added that the strength of the families in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon was a message of assured victory (Hamas website, November 1, 2024).



The Iranian minister of intelligence at Hamas offices in Tehran (Mashreq News, November 1, 2024)

Iranian involvement in Lebanon

► Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani stressed in a letter to Hezbollah's incoming secretary-general Naim Qassem Iran's continued support for Hezbollah. He said Iran would stand by Hezbollah until "the elimination of Zionism and the liberation of Palestine and Jerusalem." Qaani also participated in a memorial ceremony in Tehran for the chairman of Hezbollah's operational council, Hashem Safi al-Din. Also participating in the ceremony were Majles speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib, Khamenei's advisor Mohammad Mokhber, and IRGC deputy commander Ali Fadavi (Tasnim, October 31, 2024).



Esmail Qaani (center) at the memorial ceremony for Hashem Safi al-Din (Tasnim, October 31, 2024)

► On November 5, 2024, a ceremony was held in Tehran to mark 40 days since the deaths of Hassan Nasrallah and Abbas Nilforoushan, attended by the president of Iran, his first deputy, the deputy commander of the IRGC, and other senior officials. Iraj Masjedi, deputy commander of the Qods Force, said on the sidelines of the event that Iran had announced several times that if the "Zionist regime" threatened Iran, it would respond forcefully and that it should expect it. He said it was inconceivable that Israel would threaten Iran and act against it, and then expect restraint on its part. Masjedi added that Iran would continue to support the "resistance front," including Hezbollah and Hamas (Tasnim, November 5, 2024).



Ceremony marking 40 days since Nasrallah's death (Tasnim, November 5, 2024)

Iranian involvement in Iraq

► Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian met in the city of Qom with Seyyed Javad Shahrastani, the representative of senior Iraqi Shiite cleric Ayatollah Ali Sistani in Iran. The meeting took place as part of a visit by the Iranian president to the religious center in Qom to meet with senior clerics (IRNA, October 31, 2024).



The Iranian president meets with Sistani's representative to Iran (IRNA, October 31, 2024)

Operations of the Shiite militias

Iraq

Operations against Israel²

► In the past week (October 30 – November 6, 2024, as of 1:00 p.m.), the Islamic Resistance in Iraq issued 30 claims of responsibility for 33 drone attacks against 27 targets in Israel, including “radar sites in Dimona,” a target in Tel Aviv, and the Tamar gas platform (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, October 30 – November 6, 2024). In addition, the Saraya Awliya al-Dam militia (Guardians of Blood Brigades) issued four claims of responsibility for four attacks against targets in the Golan Heights and Haifa (Saraya Awliya al-Dam Telegram channel,

² For further information, see the ITIC's study from November 6, 2024, [“The Pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq: Characteristics of their Activity since the Beginning of the Iron Swords War”](#)

October 30 – November 6, 2024). The IDF Spokesperson reported the interception of more than ten drones approaching from the east, some outside Israeli territory, with one additional drone exploding in the southern Golan Heights. There were no casualties (IDF Spokesperson, October 30 – November 6, 2024). The Jordanian army announced the crash of a drone in the Jerash Province (Al-Mamlaka, October 31, 2024). Jordanian government spokesperson Mohammad al-Momani said there were two cases of drones crashing within the kingdom and clarified that his country opposes attempts by “regional actors” to violate its sovereignty (Petra News Agency, November 2, 2024).

► Ali al-Fatlawi, a senior figure in Ansar Allah al-Awfiya, said that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq had decided to escalate its attacks against Israel with high-quality drones and missiles. According to him, the decision was made as part of a transition to a plan designed to “increase the fire against the occupation from several fronts.” He noted that the number of attacks was increasing every day, and that soon the “form and character” of the attacks would also change (al-Araby al-Jadeed, November 3, 2024).

► The cover militia of the Nujaba Movement, Kata’ib Sarkhat al-Quds (“Jerusalem Scream Brigades”), warned that if the militia targets in Iraq were attacked, the response would be “an escalation without restraints and borders,” and that “there will be nothing between us except the language of missiles and drones.” The statement added that the militias are monitoring everything happening in the region and have a “developed” target bank and that “all your interests and bases and all your red lines will be red from the spilling of your blood by our jihad fighters” (aishab_alkahf Telegram channel, November 3, 2024).

► Senior officials in the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq discussed the possibility that Iran would attack Israel from Iraqi territory in response to the Israeli attack on Iran on the night of October 25-26, 2024. The following are notable statements:

◆ Haidar al-Lami, a member of the Nujaba Movement’s political bureau, noted that it is Iran’s right to attack Israel from any area inside Iraq, given that he claimed Israel had attacked Iran from Iraqi airspace. He said they are in full coordination with Iran to prepare the response and coordinate the appropriate time and place. He added that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq is expected to use advanced missiles in the next stage of the fighting against Israel, depending on the escalation that will take place (al-Akhbar, November 2, 2024).

◆ Ali al-Assadi, head of the Nujaba Movement’s political council, noted that according to the information they have, Israel did not use Iraqi airspace to attack Iran, but operated through Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. He warned that if it were found that Iraqi airspace had been used by Israeli planes to attack Iran, it would have consequences for the American presence in the region by all Iraqi militias. He also threatened that if Israel or the United States used Iraqi territory in the future to attack Iran, American bases in the Middle East would be attacked (Newsweek, November 4, 2024).

◆ Ali al-Fatlawi, a senior Ansar Allah al-Awfiya official, assessed that since Iran’s missile unit can reach Tel Aviv and achieve its objectives directly, there is no need for it to attack from Iraqi territory (Shafaq News, November 4, 2024).

► In this context, “an Iraqi source who opposes the militias” said that the Iraqi government is unable to stop the militias from operating against Israel in the service of Iran because the militias control all the centers of power in the government and the security forces. He added that Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia’ al-Sudani does not want the militias to operate from Iraqi territory as part of the Iranian response against Israel because this could destabilize Iraq if the United States or Israel decide to attack Iraqi territory in response (1News-iq.com, November 4, 2024).

► Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the supreme religious authority of the Shiites in Iraq, stressed in his meeting with Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, the UN special representative in Iraq, that to achieve a better future for Iraq, the country must prevent foreign intervention of any kind, enforce the law, and limit weapons only to the country’s security forces (Iraqi News Agency, November 4, 2024). Subsequently, Abbas al-Zaidi, a senior Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada official, claimed that al-Sistani did not mean the weapons of the “resistance,” since it was he who had confirmed to the militias the right to “resist the occupation.” He added that the “Israeli and American occupation” understand only force and therefore the struggle is necessary (Shafaq News, November 5, 2024).

Video threatening an attack from the Golan Heights

► The Nujaba Movement released a threatening video against Israel with Hebrew subtitles, entitled “Soon you will face our fighters in your communities.” The video shows a militia fighter wearing a headband with the inscription “Golan Liberation Brigade” on his head preparing for

fighting.³ In the background, a narrator can be heard saying, “Al-Quds [i.e., Jerusalem] is a symbol of our resistance, and the Golan Heights is a symbol of our military forces stationed in Syria.” At the end of the video, there is a threat to take over Israeli communities. A post accompanying the video on the militia’s Telegram channel reads in Persian: “There is a possibility of the presence of Iraqi jihad fighters in Syria and Lebanon” (Nujaba Movement Telegram channel, November 5, 2024).



Right: A Nujaba Movement fighter in the video. Left: The threat to invade Israel (Nujaba Movement Telegram channel, November 5, 2024)

Another attack attributed to a pro-Iranian militia in Saudi Arabia

► On October 31, 2024, another claim of responsibility for an attack against Israel was issued by a militia called the Islamic Resistance from the Land of the Two Holy Places, which claims to operate from Saudi Arabia. In its announcement, the militia stated that it attacked a target in the Jordan Valley with drones and noted that it would continue to support “the resistance in Lebanon and Palestine” (Saberin News, October 31, 2024). This is the second time the militia has claimed responsibility for an attack against Israel after a previous announcement on October 26, 2024. There has been no verification of the militia’s claims or confirmation of its actual existence.

Yemen

Houthi activity against vessels

► Houthi armed forces spokesman Yahya Saria made it clear that the Houthis would continue to impose a “naval blockade” on the “Israeli enemy” and attack any vessel linked to Israel, despite attempts to circumvent the “punitive measures.” According to him, maritime shipping

³ On March 8, 2017, Akram al-Kaabi, secretary-general of the Nujaba Movement, announced the establishment of the Golan Liberation Brigade as part of Iran and Hezbollah’s plan to attack Israel from Syria and take over the Golan Heights.

companies try to hide their connection to the “Israeli enemy” by selling assets, transferring goods to other companies, or registering under other names. The Houthis, however, will not take into account the change in ownership or the flags flown on the vessels and will continue to prevent them from crossing the Houthi forces’ area of activity (Yahya Saria’s Telegram channel, November 3, 2024).

► A new report by a panel of experts on Yemen submitted to the UN Security Council cited “sources” as noting that several shipping agencies had made illegal payments to the Houthis to avoid damaging their vessels in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. According to the sources, the Houthis earned \$180 million per month thanks to the illegal payments, but the experts noted that they were unable to verify the information (Report no. S/2024/731, October 11, 2024).

► It was reported that Tim Lenderking, the US special envoy to Yemen, has repeatedly urged Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries to oppose the escalation by the Houthis in the region. Lenderking added that the Houthis are not helping the Palestinians but are significantly endangering Yemen, which is suffering from the war. Additionally, he called on regional actors to help disentangle Houthi actions from the conflict in the Gaza Strip (The Washington Post, November 3, 2024).

Statements by senior Houthi officials

► On October 31, 2024, Houthi Movement leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi delivered his weekly speech, pledging that Houthi forces would continue their military operations against Israel. He condemned the IDF’s actions in the northern Gaza Strip and accused Israel of committing war crimes, starving, displacing, and killing residents, especially in that area. He also condemned the new Israeli law against UNRWA’s activities, the IDF’s activity in southern Lebanon, the IDF’s attack on Iran and its “violation of its sovereignty,” and the US support for Israel’s actions (al-Masirah, November 1, 2024).

► Nasr al-Din Omar, deputy head of the Houthi Movement’s Information Bureau, claimed that the United States had sent a message to the Houthis to allow its aircraft carrier to pass through the area unharmed, but they refused and acted against it. He added that the region was heading towards escalation and made it clear that Yemen would not remain a “support front” but would become a battlefield (Shehab News Agency, November 2, 2024).