



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

April 9—23, 2025

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Highlights¹

- ▶ Iran condemned Israel's continued activity in the Gaza Strip. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei called on the Muslim world to take "economic, political and operational" measures against Israel. The commander of the Qods Force and the commander of the Basij forces expressed confidence in the ability of the Palestinian "resistance" to successfully stand up to Israel.
- ▶ Amid the growing discussion on the issue of Hezbollah's disarmament, Iran's ambassador to Lebanon expressed firm opposition to the disarmament of Hezbollah and warned of the consequences of such a move, but later clarified that it is a Lebanese internal matter.
- ▶ The Iranian foreign minister declared that Iran has no relations with the transitional government in Syria and is in no hurry to establish such relations.
- ▶ The Houthis claimed responsibility for ten attacks against Israel using ballistic missiles and drones. The IDF Spokesperson reported three incidents of ballistic missile interception and another interception of a drone. There were no casualties.
- ▶ The United States continued its attacks against Houthi military targets and reported the destruction of the energy terminal at the port of Ras Issa. The Houthis accused the Americans of killing dozens of civilians and made it clear that the attacks would not prevent them from continuing their "support" of the Gaza Strip.

Iran's involvement in the Palestinian arena

- ▶ Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said in a meeting with senior regime officials that the crimes of the "gang of criminals ruling Palestine" have crossed all boundaries. He noted that he does not remember such "deliberate and cruel" harm to children, patients, journalists,

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

hospitals, and ambulances. Khamenei added that the Muslim world should take serious, coordinated, and collective action: economic, political, and if necessary, operational, on this issue (Iranian Supreme Leader's website, April 15, 2025).

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke with his Egyptian counterpart, Badr Abdelatty, to discuss developments in the region. He stressed the need for collective action by the countries of the region to immediately stop the “crimes of the Zionist regime” and to establish a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, April 10, 2025). Araghchi also spoke with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, discussing the situation in the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian territories. They stressed the need to continue consultations to reduce tension in the region, deal with the humanitarian consequences of the Israeli attacks, and protect the Palestinian people (IRNA, April 21, 2025).

► Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei strongly condemned the IDF attack on Al-Mamadani Hospital in the Gaza Strip on April 13, 2025, describing it as a “war crime.”² He noted that the “Zionist regime” continues to commit “genocide” in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and stressed the direct responsibility of the Western countries supporting Israel, especially the United States, Britain, and Germany, for the continuation of these crimes. He called on the international community to respond decisively to these crimes, and on the Islamic countries to take the necessary steps to stop them and bring senior “Zionist regime” officials to justice (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, April 13, 2025).

► The commander of the Qods Force, Esmail Qaani, said at a memorial ceremony for an IRGC member who was killed in an Israeli attack in Damascus in early April 2024 that the Gaza Strip stands firm even a year and a half after the war, which is a testament to the determination of civilians. He noted that the killing of women and children and the destruction of the homes of defenseless civilians do not indicate strength, but rather weakness and helplessness. He added that as could be seen in Lebanon and Yemen, the “resistance” had inflicted the greatest blows on the “enemy” with minimal resources, and that the capabilities of the “resistance” are the result of local efforts and innovations (Mehr, April 9, 2025).

² The IDF Spokesperson said that a Hamas command and control compound that operated inside the hospital and was used to plan and carry out terrorist attacks against IDF forces and Israeli civilians was attacked. It was stressed that prior to the attack, steps had been taken to reduce the possibility of harm to civilians and the hospital, including early warning in the area, the use of precision munitions, and aerial observations (IDF Spokesperson, April 13, 2025).



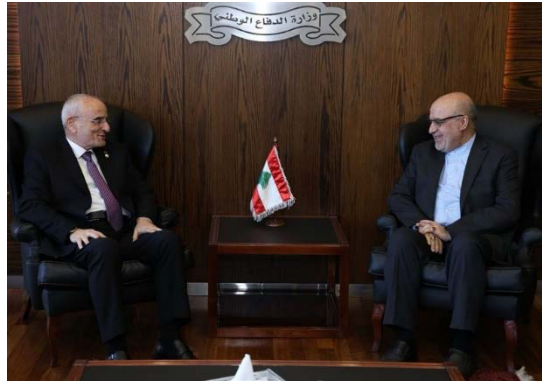
The Qods Force commander (Mehr, April 9, 2025)

► Gholam-Reza Soleimani, the commander of the Basij forces, declared at a conference in Tehran that “we speak proudly of Palestine and are proud of its existence” and that it will not be long before it is liberated. He noted that the “crimes of the Zionists” are being committed with the support of the Western powers and that people all over the world have woken up and are now thinking about how to eradicate the evil power of Zionism and cleanse the world of its existence. He added that thanks to the Islamic Revolution, humanity today sees Palestine as the central issue in the world (snn.ir, April 15, 2025).

Iran’s involvement in Lebanon

► Iran’s ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, expressed strong opposition to Hezbollah’s disarmament. He said that the “disarmament project” is a “clear conspiracy” against the countries and that Iran is aware of the danger involved in this plot and warns others not to fall into this trap. He added that while the United States is equipping the “Zionist regime” with the latest weapons and missiles, some countries are prevented from strengthening their armies, and others are under pressure to give up their weapons stockpiles under various pretexts. Amani warned that as soon as those countries gave in to the demand to disarm, they would be exposed to attack and occupation, as happened in Iraq, Syria, and Libya (Mojtaba Amani’s X account, April 18, 2025). Following these remarks, it was reported that Lebanese Foreign Minister Yusuf Raji would summon Ambassador Amani to protest his remarks (Al-Markazia News Agency, April 22, 2025). In light of the criticism, Amani stressed that Iran does not intend to impose its position on what is happening in the internal Lebanese arena and that it respects the decision-makers in Beirut. He added that Tehran views the issue of Hezbollah’s disarmament as an internal Lebanese matter (Al-Jadeed, April 23, 2025).

► Iran's Ambassador to Beirut Amani met with Lebanese Defense Minister Michel Mansa and congratulated him on taking office. He stressed the depth of bilateral relations and Iran's continued support for Lebanon and its commitment to support it in the face of the challenges ahead. Amani said Iran is ready to provide Lebanon with the necessary assistance at any time, especially in areas that serve its national interests and contribute to its stability and security (Tasnim, April 10, 2025).



**Meeting of the Iranian ambassador to Lebanon with the Lebanese minister of defense
(Tasnim, April 10, 2025)**

Iran in the face of events in Syria

► Former Iranian Ambassador to Syria Hossein Akbari said at a ceremony marking the anniversary of the Israeli attack in Damascus on April 1, 2024, that the reopening of the Iranian embassy in Damascus depends on maintaining principles and rules that form the basis of Iran's international relations. He noted that Syria's new rulers must show to what extent they can protect the rights of minorities and Syria's independence. He added that Iran is not rushing to normalize relations with the new regime in Syria and will patiently and cautiously assess the situation in the country. According to him, in a situation where the "Zionist regime" attacks Syria and occupies territories from it, it is natural that Iran will make decisions taking into account its principles and national interests. He emphasized that if the criteria are met and Syria's national sovereignty is preserved, diplomatic relations between the two countries can be restored (snn.ir, April 13, 2025).



Hossein Akbari (snn.ir, April 13, 2025)

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that Iran has no relations with the current government in Syria and is not in a hurry to establish such relations, but that it is not acting against it. He noted that Iran is waiting for the Syrian government to ensure security and stability in the country and to establish a legal government with the participation of all ethnic groups in the country. Araghchi said that he discussed the issue of Syria in his meeting in Moscow with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and that both countries are very concerned about the situation in the country. He added that the territory occupied by Israel in Syria is even larger than the area of the Gaza Strip and that clashes continue in various parts of the country. He stressed that Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty are more important to Iran and Russia than anything else and that Iran continues to consult with the leaders of the countries of the region regarding the situation in Syria. He also clarified that Iran does not oppose the transitional government in Syria and is even willing to help it if asked to do so (Russia Today, April 19, 2025).

► Iran's Ambassador to the UN, Amir-Saeed Iravani, rejected the claims of Israel and the United States regarding Iran's involvement in destabilizing Syria. In a letter to the president of the UN Security Council, the ambassador noted that these are baseless accusations and that Iran consistently supports the preservation of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, while it is the United States and Israel that violate its sovereignty and pose a threat to its stability and security. He called on the Security Council to fulfill its responsibility and take immediate and determined action to stop Israel's violations of Syrian sovereignty, to compel it to end its occupation of the territories in Syria and withdraw from them completely. In the letter, Iravani also dismissed the claims that Iran is transferring weapons and money to Hezbollah (IRNA, April 21, 2025).

Iran's involvement in Iraq

► Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian spoke with Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid. Pezeshkian noted that the relationship with Iraq is one of the most important areas of Iran's foreign relations and stressed the need to expand and deepen the ties and cooperation between the countries. The Iraqi president said Iraq has always stood by Iran and will continue to stand by Iran and expressed hope to meet with President Pezeshkian soon to discuss cooperation between the countries (ISNA, April 11, 2025).

► "Sources" reported that Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had passed through his representatives a fatwa (religious ruling) for several militias in Iraq, allowing them to make decisions that would allow them to avoid American pressure without harming the government in Baghdad. According to the sources, the fatwa has given the militias flexibility to avoid confrontations with Israel and the United States over the past few months and allowed them to "buy time to prepare a plan to protect Iran's interests in case its talks with the United States fail." In addition, it was noted that the IRGC placed a "small team" in Baghdad whose role is to coordinate the political issues on the agenda, including the cessation of operations against the American forces "for the time being." It was also reported that discussions are being held in the coordination committee of the militias in Iraq to ensure that their power within the country's political system is maintained, and not about disarming them, contrary to reports. According to the sources, "there are those who describe the operation as a temporary relinquishment of military force to maintain political influence in the long term" (Asharq Al-Awsat, April 10, 2025).

The Houthis in Yemen

Operations against Israel

► During the period reviewed, the military spokesman for the Houthi forces, Yahya Saria, claimed responsibility for ten attacks against targets in Israel using Palestine-2 and Zulfiqar ballistic missiles and Jaffa and Samad-1 drones, including the first launch into the Haifa area. Saria stressed that the Houthi forces would continue to operate deep inside the "Zionist entity" at an escalating pace in the near future (Yahya Saria's X account and Telegram channel, April 9-23, 2025). The IDF Spokesperson reported three incidents of interception of a single ballistic missile launched from Yemen and another interception of a drone. There were no casualties (IDF Spokesperson, April 9-23, 2025).

► Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi expressed regret that some Arab regimes and forces are adopting the idea of disarming the “resistance” in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, even after “what happened in the Gaza Strip,” and said that “any proposal to disarm the Palestinian resistance is illogical and stupid.” He noted that the missile launches at Israel “coincided with the Passover holiday as a holiday gift” and that it is evidence that the American strikes did not succeed in stopping the Houthis’ actions or harming their military capabilities (Al-Masirah Telegram channel, April 17, 2025).

► Hezam al-Asad, a member of the Houthi political bureau, issued the following statement in Hebrew: “According to reports, hundreds of thousands of settlers have left the occupied Palestinian territories, including more than 1,700 millionaires and 8,300 high-tech executives, over the past year. This enormous wave of flight reflects the growing sense of fear and lack of security within the occupying entity. We in Yemen emphasize the continuation and intensification of our military positions and actions in the path of helping our oppressed brothers in Gaza, punishing the murderers, taking revenge on the criminals, and continuing the path to the liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea. Occupation does not bring security – it only accelerates collapse” (Hezam al-Asad’s X account, April 9, 2025).

American attacks against the Houthis

► During the period reviewed, American forces continued their attacks against Houthi military targets in areas controlled by the movement in Yemen. “Yemeni sources” reported that the strikes were aimed at targets in many provinces, including the central provinces of Sana’a, Saada, and Al-Hudaydah, and included above-ground and underground military facilities, airports, missile and drone facilities, weapons depots, and civilian infrastructure (Arab and Houthi media, April 9-23, 2025). The US Central Command (CENTCOM) reported that its forces attacked and “destroyed” the energy terminal in Ras Issa to damage the fuel supply used for Houthi activities which provided them with an illegal source of income (CENTCOM X account, April 17, 2025). The Houthi Ministry of Health reported that eighty people were killed and 150 were wounded in the attack in Ras Issa (Al-Masirah, April 18, 2025).



Left: Funeral ceremonies for those killed in the US attack on Ras Issa (Houthi movement Telegram channel, April 20, 2025). Right: The damage in the energy terminal in Ras Issa (Al-Masirah Telegram channel, April 18, 2025)

► The American Ambassador to Yemen, Steven Fagin, stated that the purpose of the American operation is “to eliminate Ansar Allah’s capabilities and operations, deprive it of resources, and thereby end its attacks on U.S. personnel and civilians, U.S. partners, and maritime shipping in the Red Sea.” He noted that the American strikes eliminate weapons storage and manufacturing sites, command and control facilities, as well as radars and other sites that enable the Houthi attacks, in addition to eliminating key Houthi commanders. The ambassador added that the US administration is ramping up its efforts to impede the flow of weapons and weapons components from Iran and other countries to the Houthis. Furthermore, through the US designation of the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and through other sanctions, the administration is cutting off financial flows to the Houthis (US Embassy in Yemen website, April 10, 2025). The US Treasury Department has imposed sanctions on the International Bank of Yemen (IBY) and several of its senior officials for providing financial support to the Houthis (US Treasury Department website, April 17, 2025).

► As part of the reinforcement of forces in the region, CENTCOM reported the arrival of the aircraft carrier Carl Vinson and additional warships accompanying it to the Red Sea region. Thus, the USS Vinson Task Force joined the USS Harry S. Truman Task Force, which has been stationed in the region since the beginning of the US attacks in Yemen in March 2025 (CENTCOM X account, April 10, 2025).

► During the period reviewed, the Houthi military spokesman, Yahya Saria, claimed responsibility for four attacks against the American aircraft carriers Vinson and Truman and the warships accompanying them in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea, using ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones. Additionally, Saria announced the downing of three American MQ-9 drones in Yemeni airspace using domestically manufactured surface-to-air missiles. Since

the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip in October 2023, the Houthis have claimed responsibility for downing 22 MQ-9 drones in Yemeni airspace (Yahya Saria's X account and Telegram channel, April 9-23, 2025). "Sources" reported that since the beginning of American strikes against the Houthis on March 15, 2025, six MQ-9 drones have been downed (X account of Jennifer Griffin, Fox News chief national security correspondent, April 19, 2025).



**Houthi residents near the remains of an American drone
(Houthi Combat Information Telegram channel, April 19, 2025)**

► Senior Houthi regime officials condemned the continued American attacks and accused the United States of deliberately targeting civilians. They also stressed that they would continue their support for the Gaza Strip despite the American "aggression." The following are prominent statements:

- ◆ Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi said that the Houthi forces continue to confront the "American enemy" and target the aircraft carrier. According to him, the Houthi attacks on the aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman "almost completely neutralized" its activity in the Red Sea, and therefore the "enemy" needed another aircraft carrier (Al-Masirah Telegram channel, April 17, 2025).
- ◆ The Houthi Foreign Ministry claimed that since mid-March 2025, more than 100 civilians have been killed and more than 220 wounded, many of them women and children. The statement noted that the American "aggression" is a "flagrant violation" of Yemeni sovereignty and international law and that the United States is responsible for the escalation of tensions in the Red Sea and the threat to international navigation there. It was stressed that security and stability in the area would be achieved only by ending the "aggression" and lifting the "siege" on the Gaza Strip (Houthi movement Telegram channel, April 9, 2025).

- ◆ Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abd al-Salam called the US attack on Ras Issa “cowardly aggression and American crime” that threatens the interests of the entire Yemeni people. He added, “This heinous crime against innocent civilians and civilian facilities is a great scandal on the part of the US military, which prides itself on its military superiority. It exposes a criminal nature that is deeply rooted in atrocities and cruelty” (Mohammed Abd al-Salam’s X account, April 18, 2025).
- ◆ Mohammed al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi political bureau, said that the United States “takes pride in destroying civilian facilities and targeting civilians in Yemen.” He also stressed that the Houthis would continue their military operations, which would cause heavy losses among “our enemies, the American and the Israeli,” and that they should expect surprises in the coming days (Al-Jazeera, April 18, 2025).
- ◆ Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, a member of the Houthi political bureau, said that “the enemy is committing deliberate war crimes against civilian sites, including the most recent crime in Ras Issa.” He added that the attacks were “part of a dirty mission to support the war of destruction of the entity in the Gaza Strip” (Mohammed Ali al-Houthi’s X account, April 18, 2025).
- The continued American attacks against Yemen, especially the attack on the port of Ras Issa, provoked condemnations from Iran and members of the “axis of resistance:”
 - ◆ Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei noted that the American attacks threaten peace and security in the world and constitute a violation of Yemen’s territorial integrity and international law. Baghaei added that they would further encourage the “Zionist regime” to continue its “genocide” in “Palestine” and increase insecurity in the region. He called on the UN Security Council and Muslim countries to mobilize to stop the attacks and to condemn the aggression against Yemen (ISNA, April 16, 2025). Baghaei also strongly condemned the American attack on the port of Ras Issa, in which dozens of people were reportedly killed. He said that the “aggression” against Yemen had made the United States a partner in “the crimes of the Zionists in Palestine and the region,” and expressed his condolences for those killed in the attack (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, April 18, 2025).
 - ◆ Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) issued statements condemning the American “aggression” against the port of Ras Issa in Yemen. They said that it was “a continuation of the war of annihilation against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip

and of the joint Zionist-American aggression against the peoples of our nation” (Hamas and PIJ Telegram channels, April 18, 2025).

◆ The Kata’ib Hezbollah militia in Iraq said the attack was “the latest in a series of criminal operations” that confirm the “malicious role” of the United States in destabilizing the region and implementing a regional war on the level of “genocide in Palestine.” The announcement also said that the American attacks against the Yemeni people are “an expansion of the criminal path embodied in the reality of American policy, which serves the security of the Zionist entity and its expansionist agenda and encourages it to commit more war crimes against the innocent people of Palestine” (Kata’ib Hezbollah Telegram channel, April 18, 2025).