



# Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

May 7-14, 2025

Editor: Dr. Raz Zimmt



## Highlights<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei re-emphasized the importance of the Palestinian issue for the Muslim world and called for not ignoring the “crimes of the Zionist regime.” The Iranian foreign minister emphasized in discussions with his Arab counterparts the need for cooperation between regional countries to stop Israel’s attacks in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ A Hamas delegation led by the head of the movement’s Shura Council met in Doha with the head of Iran’s Strategic Council for Foreign Policy and discussed developments in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ Against the backdrop of a possible Israeli military action against nuclear facilities in Iran, the commander of the Revolutionary Guards warned Israel about the consequences of such an attack.
- ▶ Senior Hezbollah officials reportedly asked the Iranian leadership not to leave Revolutionary Guards officers in Lebanon for fear that Israel would eliminate them.
- ▶ The Houthis claimed responsibility for seven attacks against Israel using ballistic missiles and drones, including the first launch toward Ramon International Airport, and threatened to continue the “air blockade” on Israel. The IDF Spokesperson confirmed three incidents of intercepting a ballistic missile and another interception of a drone. An Israeli warning was published to evacuate the three Houthi seaports.
- ▶ The Houthis welcomed the US decision to stop airstrikes against them, saying it was an American “failure” and an “embarrassment” for Israel. The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman praised the “steadfast stance” of the Yemeni people in support of Palestinians against Israel.

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

## Iran's involvement in the Palestinian arena and threats to Israel

► Senior Iranian figures praised the resistance of the residents of the Gaza Strip against the “Zionist enemy” and stressed the need for pan-Islamic cooperation against the “aggression of the Zionist regime” and the support it receives from the United States.

◆ Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said in a meeting with workers that attempts are being made to make issues related to “Palestine” forgotten and that the Muslim peoples must not allow it. He said that public attention should not be diverted from the issue of “Palestine” using rumors, various talks, and raising new and meaningless issues, and that public consciousness must not be diverted from the Palestinian issue. Khamenei added that “the crimes committed by the Zionist regime in Gaza and Palestine” are not something that can be ignored, and that the entire world must stand up to the “Zionist regime” itself and to the Americans who support it in the full sense of the word. He said the Palestinian people and the “oppressed” residents of the Gaza Strip are not only facing the “Zionist regime” but also the United States and Britain. The Supreme Leader declared that he believes Palestine will defeat the “Zionist occupiers” and expressed hope that the Iranian people and the believing peoples will see with their own eyes the day when “Palestine will defeat the invaders and those who stole Palestine” (Iranian Supreme Leader's website, May 10, 2025).



**Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei (Iranian Supreme Leader's website, May 10, 2025)**

◆ Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met in Jeddah with his Saudi counterpart, Faisal bin Farhan. At the meeting, he stressed the need for serious involvement of the Islamic world in dealing with threats and challenges, especially with regard to “occupied Palestine, stopping the genocide, and preventing the colonialist plot to erase Palestine” (Tasnim, May 10, 2025). Araghchi also met with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister

Mohammed bin Abdulrahman and discussed developments in the region, especially in the Gaza Strip. They stressed the importance of cooperation between the countries of the region to end the “suffering and pain of the Palestinian people” (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, May 10, 2025).

◆ Araghchi spoke with his Egyptian counterpart, Badr Abdelatty, and discussed developments in the region. The two stressed the need for an immediate cessation of Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, and Syria. The Iranian foreign minister also met with his counterpart from the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, and discussed developments in the region. Araghchi expressed regret at “the continued genocide and the killing of the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank” and called for serious action by the countries of the region in light of the continued Israeli attacks in the region (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, May 12, 2025).

◆ Foreign Minister Araghchi also referred to developments in the Palestinian arena and Israel’s activity in the region in his speech at the Iranian-Arab dialogue conference in Qatar. He noted that it is not possible to talk about realizing the goals of the Muslim world and at the same time turn a blind eye to the injustice done to the Palestinian people. Araghchi said that the “Zionist entity” is the most important source of threat to peace in the region and that the United States, in supporting it, has positioned itself as an accomplice to its crimes. He added that the two-state idea, which had led to the postponement of the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people for several decades, had been officially abolished by the “Zionist regime,” and that it is working for the colonial annihilation of the Palestinian people by the cruelest means of “genocide and forced exile.” The Iranian foreign minister stressed that stopping the “genocide in Palestine” and preventing the realization of the project of erasing the Palestinian people is the legal, moral, religious, and strategic responsibility of everyone. He also said that Israel aims through its attacks in the region to destroy and weaken the Islamic countries and to occupy as much of the lands of the countries of the region as possible, and that all

the governments of the region have a legal and moral obligation to stand up to Israel (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, May 11, 2025).



**The Iranian foreign minister at the conference in Qatar (IRNA, May 10, 2025)**

- ◆ Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei strongly condemned “the barbaric attacks of the Zionist regime against Palestinian refugee centers and tents in Jabalia and Khan Yunis.” He noted that the “widespread and unprecedented violations of human rights in occupied Palestine” constitute a grave violation of the fundamental principles and rules of international law. Baghaei stressed the urgent need to advance the handling of open cases against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. He also called for effective action by the international community and the countries of the region for an immediate end to the “criminal attacks of the Zionist regime,” the expedited delivery of food and medicine to the Gaza Strip, a complete withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip, and the planning of measures to deal with the “injustices of the Zionist regime” against the countries of the region, including Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, May 13, 2025).
- A Hamas delegation headed by the head of the movement’s Shura Council, Mohammad Darwish, met in Doha with Kamal Kharazi, head of Iran’s Strategic Council for Foreign Policy. The two sides discussed the latest developments and “the continuation of the Zionist regime’s genocidal war against the Gaza Strip and the policy of starvation of the Palestinian people.” Darwish stressed that Hamas would continue to defend the Palestinian people and would use all means to stop the war, lift the siege, and ensure humanitarian aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip, and that the Palestinian people would not give up their rights in “Palestine.” Kharazi emphasized Iran’s position in support of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people’s struggle against the “crimes of the Zionist

enemy.” He warned that the “Zionist regime’s greed” is directed not only at “Palestine” but at the entire region, and that this further emphasizes the need for cooperation between the countries of the region to support the Gaza Strip in general and to deal with the “occupying regime” (Palinfo, May 12, 2025).



**Kamal Kharazi meets with the Hamas delegation (Palinfo, May 12, 2025)**

► Hossein Salami, the commander of the Revolutionary Guards, said at a Basij conference in Mashhad that the residents of the Gaza Strip had managed to withstand the siege and difficulties, that the United States and Israel had not succeeded in realizing their goals, and that the Gaza Strip had become stronger. Salami also said that Iran’s enemies are threatening it, but that they could not deal with even a single missile from Yemen, so what would they do if they encountered 600 missiles at once (Tasnim, May 13, 2025).

► At a ceremony commemorating former Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, IRGC Commander Salami warned Israel against attacking Iran. He noted that if Israel made even a small mistake, the gates of hell would open before it and Iran would deliver a blow that would make it forget what happened in the two Iranian attacks on Israel (in April and October 2024). Salami reiterated his threats during a ceremony unveiling an underground drone base of the Revolutionary Guards Navy in southern Iran. He declared that a central principle of Iran’s defense doctrine is that any place from which its enemies operate against its interests and targets will become a target. Salami stressed that Iran’s enemies must be aware of its power so that they do not make hasty decisions based on mistaken considerations (snn.ir, May 8, 2025).



**The commander of the Revolutionary Guards (Tasnim, May 8, 2025)**

## Iran's involvement in Lebanon

► Senior Hezbollah officials reportedly asked the Iranian leadership not to leave any Revolutionary Guards officers in Lebanon for fear that Israel would try to eliminate them on its soil to put pressure on Tehran and disrupt the nuclear talks between Iran and the US. According to the report, whose reliability is unclear, some Revolutionary Guards officers are staying in Lebanon and moving from place to place under heavy and strict security. Most of them live in areas far from the supervision institutions, mainly in the Dahiye in southern Beirut and in the Bekaa (Al-Arabiya, May 12, 2025).

## Iran in the face of events in Syria

► In his speech at a meeting with workers in Tehran, Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei referred to the developments in Syria, saying that Israel's actions in Syria are not a sign of its strength, but rather of its weakness, and that they would further weaken it (Iranian Supreme Leader's website, May 10, 2025).

► IRGC Commander Salami said at the Basij conference in Mashhad that Syria was indeed lost, but when the Iranians were there, it was secure, while now every part of it is under the control of another country, and these countries are fighting each other and are stuck in a quagmire (Tasnim, May 13, 2025).

## Iran's involvement in Iraq

► Senior Iranian cleric Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi-Amoli met in Najaf with Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the most senior Shiite cleric in Iraq. Javadi-Amoli expressed his appreciation for Sistani and his contribution to the Shiite religious establishment, the Islamic community, and the people of Iraq, and for his contribution to maintaining social order and confronting extremist factions, including ISIS. The Iranian cleric also stressed the importance of the religious seminary in



Najaf, Iraq, for the Islamic world and the need for closer cooperation between the Shiite religious seminaries in the two countries (ISNA, May 12, 2025). Javadi-Amoli also met with Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who heads the Shiite national movement in Iraq (Tasnim, May 13, 2025).



**Ayatollah Javadi-Amoli meets with Ayatollah Sistani (ISNA, May 12, 2025)**

## The Houthis in Yemen

### The direct confrontation with Israel

► During the period under review, the military spokesman of the Houthi forces, Yahya Saria, claimed responsibility for seven attacks against targets in Israel using ballistic missiles and drones. According to Saria, five of the attacks using missiles were directed at Ben Gurion Airport, and another attack was directed for the first time at Ramon International Airport near Eilat, as part of the “air blockade” they imposed on Israel. Saria claimed that the missiles launched at Ben Gurion Airport “achieved their goal” and that millions of “Zionists” ran to shelters and traffic at the airport was stopped for long minutes (Yahya Syria’s Telegram channel, May 7-14, 2025). The IDF Spokesperson announced three separate incidents of intercepting a ballistic missile launched from Yemen and another interception of a drone launched from the east. There were no casualties, and no damage was caused (IDF Spokesperson, May 7-14, 2025).

► In addition, three more incidents of ballistic missile launches toward Israel were reported, but they fell on their way (Israeli media, May 7-14, 2025). The Jordanian army announced the fall of a missile “from an unknown source” in the Ma’an district in the south of the country, without casualties or damage (Al-Ghad, May 13, 2025).

► “Sources” reported that the Houthis have expanded their target bank in northern Israel after their recent attacks on the Haifa area and Ramat David base and against the backdrop of Israeli attacks in Yemen. According to the “sources,” the new targets will include sites related to the

economy, as well as several “vital facilities,” following the principle of “an eye for an eye” response. The “sources” added that the Houthis will act without red lines and establish a new equation – airport for airport, factories for factories, power stations for power stations (Al-Akhbar, May 12, 2025).

► Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthi movement, boasted of “the successful launch” at Ben Gurion Airport on May 4, 2025. He noted that the success of the attack has wide-ranging implications for “the enemy,” and it created a significant resonance because it is one of the most sensitive and important facilities for it. Moreover, al-Houthi said that the action proved the vulnerability of “the Israeli entity” and caused significant economic damage to it, as several large international airlines announced the suspension of their flights to it. Finally, he added that they continue to demonstrate a firm stance in support of the Palestinians – “whether by attacking deep in the occupied Palestine or by prohibiting the passage of Israeli ships” (Al-Masirah, May 8, 2025).



**Right: Houthi video threatening to attack airports in Israel (X account of the media arm of the Houthi forces, May 8, 2025). Left: Cartoon illustrating the continuation of Houthi attacks on Israel during Trump’s visit to the Middle East (Saba News Agency, May 14, 2025)**

► Against the backdrop of continued Houthi launches into Israeli territory, on May 11, 2025, the IDF Spokesperson in Arabic, Avichay Adraee, issued a notice warning anyone in the seaports of Al-Hudaydah, Ras Issa, and Salif to evacuate them and move away from them (Avichay Adraee’s X account, May 11, 2025). On May 14, 2025, after another launch toward Israeli territory in the morning hours, Adraee published a repeated warning to evacuate the three seaports



(Avichay Adraee's X account, May 14, 2025). However, as of this writing, no attack has been carried out.

► In this context, Muhammad al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi political bureau, warned that they are prepared for any escalation by “the Zionist entity” and that they will respond to it. He added that they will not allow the “entity” to set new rules of engagement (al-Jazeera Telegram channel, May 11, 2025). Nasreddin Amer, the vice chairman of the Houthi media authority, said that the warning to evacuate the seaports is “psychological warfare designed to create fear and concern before the attack.” He also claimed that the Israeli warning was intended to portray “the enemy” as a humanitarian party that warned civilians, but this assumption contradicts the times when “the enemy attacked without warning, including power stations and electricity, and killed civilians.” Nasreddin Amer also called for not filming the attacks or distributing the videos as this “will serve the enemy” (Nasreddin Amer's X account, May 11, 2025).



**Houthi government officials review the damage caused at the port of Al-Hudaydah (right) and the airport in Sana'a (left) (Saba News Agency, May 7 and 13, 2025)**

## **The confrontation with the United States**

► In the past week, the “ceasefire” between the US and the Houthis, announced by US President Trump on May 6, 2025, was maintained. In a speech during his visit to Saudi Arabia, concurrently with a Houthi missile launch toward Israel, Trump noted that US military forces had carried out more than 1,100 strikes against the Houthis, and as a result they “agreed to stop” attacks against American vessels and against freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. He said, “We hit them hard, we got what we came for – and then we got out” (the White House website, May 13, 2025).

► “Up-to-date sources” reported that the American operation against the Houthis, which began on March 15, 2025, cost the US more than a billion dollars and included thousands of bombs

and missiles, deployment of two Patriot missile air defense systems, seven drones shot down, as well as two fighter jets that sank in the sea. “Sources in the US Department of Defense” denied the financial estimate mentioned and claimed that the cost of the operation is closer to \$400 million. It was also claimed in the report that the full details of the agreement are not known, as well as its validity, and whether or not it constitutes a milestone for a broader agreement with the Houthis (NBC, May 8, 2025). In an additional report, “sources” said that the main reason for the American willingness to work for a ceasefire is the costs of fighting, the loss of aircraft caused during it, and the likelihood that the Houthis will succeed in rehabilitating the damage caused as a result of it. It was also reported that during the fighting, the Houthis almost succeeded in several incidents in shooting down American F-35 and F-16 fighter jets and causing casualties among the American forces (New York Times, May 12, 2025).

► “Official American sources” reported that days before the ceasefire between the US and the Houthis, American intelligence received information that Houthi officials were looking for a “way out” after seven consecutive weeks of American bombings. In addition, “two sources” reported that Iran had a significant part in pushing the Houthis to negotiate. “Two American sources” reported that the American Special Envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, conducted indirect negotiations with the Houthi spokesman, Muhammad Abdel Salam (Reuters, May 13, 2025)

► The military spokesman of the Houthis, Yahya Saria, claimed responsibility for an attack against the American aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman and the warships accompanying it in the northern Red Sea using a ballistic missile and several drones, before the ceasefire came into effect. He claimed that the Houthi attack thwarted an attack against Yemen, caused the fall of an F-18 aircraft due to the “panic” created by the Houthi attack, and caused the withdrawal of the aircraft carrier northward (Yahya Saria’s X account, May 7, 2025). American “security sources” confirmed that an F-18 aircraft was lost in the Red Sea during an attempted landing on the aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman, and that the two pilots were rescued with minor injuries. However, the Defense Department spokesman emphasized that the aircraft was not hit by Houthi fire. This is the second F-18 aircraft lost in the Red Sea within a week (Washington Post, May 7, 2025).

► Senior Houthi government officials welcomed the cessation of American attacks and presented the decision as a “failure” of the US. They emphasized that they will continue to

prevent the movement of “Israeli” vessels in the Red Sea and that they will not stop the attacks against Israel in “support” for the Gaza Strip. The following are notable statements:

- ◆ Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthi movement, said the American actions did not succeed in supporting “the Zionist enemy” or in harming the will of the Yemeni people and their military capabilities, and therefore Washington chose the only option in its hands, which is “stopping support for the entity.” He warned that they are ready to confront the “American enemy” again if “aggression” is resumed. He also claimed that most American actions were directed at civilian targets and that, against the backdrop of the American failure, “the Zionist enemy” was forced to act on its own and attack “civilian targets” to harm the Yemeni people (Al-Masirah, May 8, 2025).
- ◆ The spokesman for the Houthi movement, Muhammad Abdel Salam, reported that the agreement with Washington came after lengthy discussions through mediators. He also noted that the first priority is completing the activity on the Palestinian issue.” He added that they will continue to hit Israeli ships until aid reaches the Gaza Strip. He also claimed that the agreement with Washington “serves the Palestinian goal and embarrasses Israel.” In addition, Abdel Salam noted that the Houthis will examine any future American support for Israel and determine their position based on its nature (al-Jazeera, May 7, 2025).
- ◆ Mahdi al-Mashat, the chairman of the Houthi Supreme Political Council, reported that the agreement is a “crushing victory,” which was achieved as a result of managing the struggle against Israeli and American actions. He noted that their military readiness is “high at all levels,” and emphasized that the response to Israeli “aggression” will be “devastating and close” (Al-Masirah Telegram channel, May 8, 2025).
- The Houthis’ allies in the “axis of resistance” also welcomed the American decision to stop the attacks in Yemen and praised the Houthis:
  - ◆ Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei praised the “steadfastness” of the Yemeni people in their support for the Palestinian people in the face of “genocide and occupation.” He said that the people of the region would never forget the “resistance of the Yemeni people” in the face of foreign aggression. He added that the United States was complicit in the “crimes of the Zionist regime” despite the announcement of the cessation of its attacks against Yemen, and that the world must take effective action quickly. It must

stop Israel's attacks on Yemen's civilian infrastructure and the killing of innocent civilians (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, May 7, 2025).

◆ The Iraqi militia of Kata'ib Hezbollah said in a statement that the US Navy had been preparing for years for a confrontation with powers such as China and Russia, and eventually found itself stuck in the Houthi quagmire in a conflict described as "the most difficult by the US Navy since World War II." It was also noted that the inability of the United States to subdue the Houthis forced it to surrender and stop its attacks. Finally, the militia welcomed the agreement but noted that the United States should not be trusted (Telegram channel of Kata'ib Hezbollah, May 7, 2025).