



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

July 2—July 7, 2025

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Highlights¹

- ▶ Senior Iranian officials continued to threaten Israel with a harsh response and the use of additional capabilities in the event of another attack on Iran. According to them, Israel has not achieved its objectives in the war.
- ▶ The Iranian media has begun to show the first signs of criticism, along with disappointment over the reluctance of Iran's regional proxies to open additional fronts against Israel during Iran's war with Israel.
- ▶ The IDF eliminated a Qods Force operative in Lebanon. The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman condemned Israel's attacks in Lebanon, accusing them of directly targeting the security of Lebanese citizens and economic life in Lebanon.
- ▶ The IDF attacked three seaports and a Houthis power plant in Yemen. The Houthis claimed responsibility for launching four ballistic missiles and eight drones at Israel, most of them after the Israeli attack, and made it clear that they would not stop "supporting" the Gaza Strip. No hits were identified in Israeli territory. Iran and Hezbollah condemned the Israeli attacks.
- ▶ The Houthis attacked two merchant ships in the Red Sea for the first time since November 2024. Both ships sank, and at least three crew members were killed.
- ▶ The pro-Iranian militias in Iraq rejected calls to disarm.
- ▶ For the second time in a week, IDF forces operating in southern Syria detained members of a terrorist squad operating in the service of the Qods Force to carry out terrorist attacks. The Islamic Resistance Front in Syria announced the death of its deputy commander and the reorganization of the military command to streamline "resistance" efforts.

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

Iran in the wake of the campaign with Israel

► Senior Iranian officials continued to threaten Israel with a harsh response if it carries out another attack on Iran:

◆ Iranian Chief of Staff Abdolrahim Mousavi said on the sidelines of the commemoration ceremony for those killed in the war with Israel that Iran's response to any act of aggression by its "enemies" would be more painful than ever. He noted that the "enemies" must know that any illegal and threatening action will be met with a firm and serious response. Referring to Israel's elimination of Iranian senior commanders and nuclear scientists during the war, Mousavi said that the "enemy" mistakenly estimated that these assassinations could destroy the "nerve center" of the armed forces, but the Iranian forces under the Supreme Leader's command would never collapse (Mehr, July 2, 2025).



Iranian Chief of Staff Mousavi (Mehr, July 2, 2025)

◆ At a memorial ceremony for IRGC commander Hossein Salami, who was killed in the Israeli strike in Iran, Chief of Staff Mousavi warned that if Israel attacks Iran again, Tehran will implement a crushing plan that was prepared in advance by order of Iran's Supreme Leader but has not yet been given the opportunity to be carried out, and even the United States will not be able to save Prime Minister Netanyahu. He noted that the nuclear issue was merely a pretext to attack Iran and topple the regime within 48 hours. According to him, Israel had planned to divide Iran, but the Iranian people prevailed. They set aside their problems and entered the battlefield united, which forced the United States to come to Netanyahu's aid and request a ceasefire to "save him" (ISNA, July 4, 2025).

◆ IRGC spokesman Ali Mohammad Naeini warned that if Israel attacks Iran again, Iran will respond decisively and without "red lines." He noted that Iran's swift response in the war disrupted the calculations of the "enemy," which sought to destroy the power of the

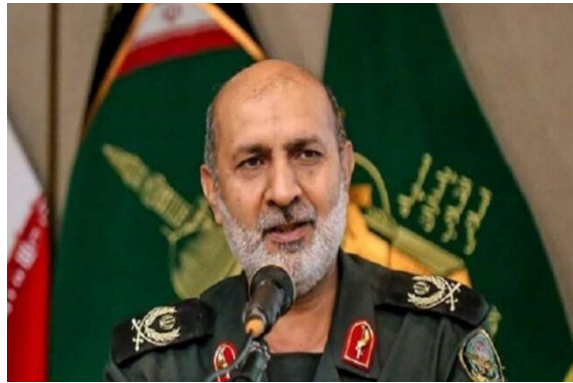
Islamic Republic regime but failed to achieve any of its objectives in the war. He noted that the “enemy” had clearly stated that the goal of the war was to subdue Iran and dismantle it. After failing to achieve its goals through negotiations, it resorted to military action without a proper understanding of the Islamic Republic. Naeini added that during the war, Iran had fired more than 2,000 missiles and drones at Israel, many of which hit their targets, and that Iran’s enemies are undoubtedly the ones who fear its destructive response in the event of another attack (ISNA, July 4, 2025).



The IRGC spokesman (ISNA, July 4, 2025)

♦ IRGC deputy commander Ali Fadavi said in an interview with the Houthis’ Al-Masirah network in Yemen that Iran is monitoring the movements of the “enemies” and will have surprises for them in case of “new stupidity” on their part. He noted that since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the “enemies” have been lying in wait for the Islamic Republic, but they have failed to achieve their goals and will continue to fail (ISNA, July 8, 2025).

♦ Rasoul Sanaei-Rad, the head of the political-ideological bureau of the Supreme Leader’s office, warned that if Israel repeats its “mistake,” Iran’s response will be harsher than that of the 12-day war. He noted that Iran did not use all of its capabilities in the latest operation, and that if the war had continued, it would have used missiles with the highest destructive power. According to him, Iran has significant stockpiles, especially in the missile domain, for dealing with prolonged conflicts. Sanaei-Rad added that the “Zionist regime” thought it could overthrow the Islamic Republic and that dismantling Iran was part of the project known as the “New Middle East” (ISNA, July 6, 2025).



Rasoul Sanaei-Rad (ISNA, July 6, 2025)

♦ In his speech at the BRICS summit in Brazil, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi condemned Israel's attacks on Iran and the US support for the attack. He noted that the attack was a clear violation of the UN Charter and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). He stressed that Iran will continue to defend itself with all its might against any future aggression, saying that the insecurity in the region will not be resolved as long as the "Israeli regime" continues to enjoy the support and encouragement of its allies. Araghchi expressed regret that in the past two years, the international community has failed to stop the "genocide of the Palestinians" and to end the "occupation" of Arab lands by Israel. He called on UN member states to condemn the Israeli attack, saying that any attempt to justify this war constitutes complicity in the crime and that the international community must prosecute those responsible for "crimes and violations of international law" by Israel (Fars, July 6, 2025).



Abbas Araghchi (Fars, July 6, 2025)

► The Iranian media has begun to show the first signs of criticism, along with disappointment over the reluctance of Iran’s regional proxies to open additional fronts against Israel during the campaign against it:²

- ◆ A commentary article on the Asr-e Iran website stated that Iran’s “proxies” did not provide it with any support during the war: Hezbollah remained silent due to the attacks it suffered over the past year; The Houthis made do with verbal threats and did not take any concrete action, although they launched several missiles at the port of Eilat; and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq have taken a cautious political stance and have not even issued an official statement of support for Iran, underscoring Baghdad’s deep security dependence on the West. According to the article, the conduct of the axis members, along with the silence of Iran’s neighbors during the war, reflects the damage to its “strategic depth” and its geopolitical isolation, which could become a strategic threat (Asr-e Iran, July 2, 2025).
- ◆ Another expression of disappointment in Tehran with the conduct of most of the components of the “axis of resistance” during the war appeared in a commentary article in the radical newspaper *Kayhan*, which praised the Houthis in Yemen for their continued military activity against Israel during the war. The article stated that the Houthis’ conduct proved that they are not Iran’s “proxy” but rather its strategic ally. It was also noted that while the traditional “resistance” forces, including Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Shiite militias in Iraq, are facing internal challenges and international pressures that have affected their effectiveness and influence, the Ansarallah movement (the Houthis) has succeeded in establishing itself as an independent and influential actor in the “axis of resistance” and has confronted regional and supra-regional enemies. According to the article, Yemen’s strategic geographical location and the Houthis’ unique military capabilities have placed them at the forefront of the struggle against the “Zionist regime,” transforming them from a local actor into one of the main pillars of the “axis of resistance” and an essential complementary component of the broader “resistance” framework. Moreover, their activity is not limited to the military sphere but also to the economic sphere, and the economic campaign they wage has implications not only for

² For further information, see the ITIC’s study from July 6, 2025, “[The Resistance Axis and the Israel-Iran War](#)”

Israel but also for the global economy. This makes them one of the key players in reshaping the regional and global order (*Kayhan*, July 2, 2025).

Iran's involvement in Lebanon

- In an attack near the Beirut airport, the IDF eliminated a Lebanese civilian who was in the service of the Iranian Qods Force and was involved in smuggling weapons into Lebanon and Judea and Samaria (IDF Spokesperson, July 4, 2025).
- Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei condemned Israel's attacks in Lebanon, stressing that they are a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the ceasefire, and are aimed directly at the security of Lebanese citizens and economic life in Lebanon (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, July 7, 2025).

Iran's involvement in Iraq

- The Supreme Leader's representative in Iraq, Mojtaba al-Hosseini, said that Tehran would not withdraw its support for the "resistance" factions in Iraq and the region. He noted that the military capabilities of the factions had become "a threat to Iran's enemies" and that the "enemy" was wasting the money of others on a lost war, while the Islamic Republic relies on its own capabilities. He added that the "Islamic resistance" is currently deployed in Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, and all other countries, and that this was the real reason why the United States and Israel were targeting the Islamic Republic. Regarding the Israeli attack on Iran, al-Hosseini said it was "treacherous," especially in light of the fact that the United States had talked about negotiations but surprised Iran with a war, and that it is Iran's duty to defend itself and support the "resistance forces" (Shafaq News, July 2, 2025).



Mojtaba al-Hosseini (Shafaq News, July 2, 2025)

The Houthis in Yemen

The direct confrontation between the Houthis and Israel

- ▶ On the morning of July 6, 2025, the Houthis' military spokesman, Yahya Saria, claimed responsibility for an attack on Ben Gurion Airport using a "hypersonic Palestine-2" ballistic missile. According to Saria, the attack achieved its objective and stopped activity at the airport (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel, July 6, 2025). The IDF Spokesperson said a missile launched from Yemen was intercepted (IDF Spokesperson, July 6, 2025).
- ▶ On the night of July 6, 2025, Israeli Air Force fighter jets attacked targets in the Houthi-controlled ports of Hodeidah, Ras Isa, and Salif, and the Ras Qantib power plant. As part of the operation, the ship "Galaxy Leader" was also attacked. The Houthis took over the ship in November 2023 and installed on it a radar system that was used to monitor vessels in international maritime space. The IDF Spokesperson noted that the attack was carried out amid repeated Houthi attacks on Israeli territory and that the targets attacked illustrated the Houthis' military use of civilian infrastructure for terrorist purposes (IDF Spokesperson and Israeli media, July 7, 2025).
- ▶ Houthi military spokesman Saria claimed that the Houthi air defense "successfully confronted the Zionist aggression" and caused many of the planes to withdraw before carrying out their attacks, by firing locally produced surface-to-air missiles, which caused "confusion among the enemy's pilots and operations rooms." Saria also said that the Israeli airstrikes would not affect Houthi activity and support for the Gaza Strip and "Palestine" (Yahya Saria's X account, July 7, 2025). However, the British maritime security company Ambrey said that the docks of the port of Hodeidah were damaged as a result of the Israeli attacks. According to the company, two Barbados-flagged vessels were apparently also damaged in the attacks, but no casualties were reported among their crews (Reuters, July 7, 2025).



Right: The attack against the Galaxy Leader (IDF Spokesperson, July 7, 2025). In the center and left: The damage caused by the Israeli attack on the port of Hodeidah (Al-Mashhad Al-Yamani, July 8, 2025)

- On the morning of July 7, 2025, Yahya Saria claimed responsibility for attacks against Ben Gurion Airport, Ashdod Port, and a power plant in the Ashkelon area using ballistic missiles and an attack on the Port of Eilat using eight drones. He claimed that all the missiles and drones had reached their targets successfully (Yahya Saria’s Telegram channel, July 7, 2025). The IDF Spokesperson confirmed that two missiles were launched from Yemen, with one reportedly being intercepted and the other not reaching Israeli territory. In addition, a drone launched from Yemen was intercepted (IDF Spokesperson and Israeli media, July 7, 2025).
- Senior Houthi figures continued to stress, even after the IDF attacks, that they did not intend to stop the “support” activities for the Gaza Strip and that the attacks against Israeli territory would continue:

- ◆ Nasreddin Amer, the deputy chairman of the Houthis’ media authority, said that “the air defense system responded in an unprecedented way to the Zionist aggression against our country” and claimed that the targets attacked were “civilian.” He emphasized that this “aggression” would not go unpunished, noting that “we do not rule out the possibility that the attacks will be resumed, but one aggression or another will not prevent Yemen from its faith and jihad, its support for Gaza, and its attacks deep inside the Zionist entity.” He also said that “the enemy will not be able to pass a single Zionist ship through the areas of activity of our forces” (Nasreddin Amer’s X account, July 7, 2025).

- ◆ Mahdi al-Mashat, the chairman of the Houthis’ Supreme Political Council, congratulated the movement’s forces for their “vigilance and willingness to defend the country and deter the attackers.” He added that “support” for the Gaza Strip would continue until “victory,” and that no “Zionist aggression, no matter its scope and impact,

will deter our people from supporting Gaza.” He warned that “our surprises will come one after the other” (Saba News Agency, July 7, 2025).

► Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei strongly condemned Israel’s attacks in Yemen. He claimed that the attacks on economic infrastructure, including airports, ports, and power plants, constitute a “blatant crime” against the Yemeni people, and criticized the indifference of the UN Security Council in the face of “the crimes of the Zionist regime against the Yemeni people” (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, July 7, 2025).

► Following the Israeli attacks in Yemen, Hezbollah said that “the enemy imagines that such aggression can prevent Yemen from supporting Gaza or stop the painful blows it is suffering from the country.” The statement said that any “aggression” would only strengthen Yemen’s determination to continue the conflict until “the aggression against Gaza ends and the blockade is lifted.” Hezbollah also called on the Arab and Islamic peoples of the world to express their support for the people of Yemen (Telegram channel of Hezbollah’s combat information arm, July 7, 2025).

► Senior Houthi figures commented on the developments in the Gaza Strip and expressed support for the “resistance,” while continuing to accuse Israel of committing “war crimes.”

◆ In his weekly speech, Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthi movement, stressed that “the barbaric and cruel Zionists continue their genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza, attacking centers and camps that house displaced people.” According to him, the “brutality of the Israeli enemy” is clear proof that international institutions can never help oppressed and vulnerable people. He expressed hope that the negotiations for a ceasefire would lead to results, stressing that “the enemy has not succeeded in eliminating the resistance in the Gaza Strip and returning its prisoners without a prisoner exchange deal.” Al-Houthi also condemned the “death traps” of the American-Israeli initiatives to control humanitarian aid, claiming that Western countries continue to supply weapons to Israel “so that it will continue its crimes against the Palestinian people.” He called on the Arab regimes to “impose a siege and isolate the Israeli enemy,” stressing that the “prohibition” on Israeli sailing in the Red Sea continues (Telegram channel of the Houthi movement, July 3, 2025).



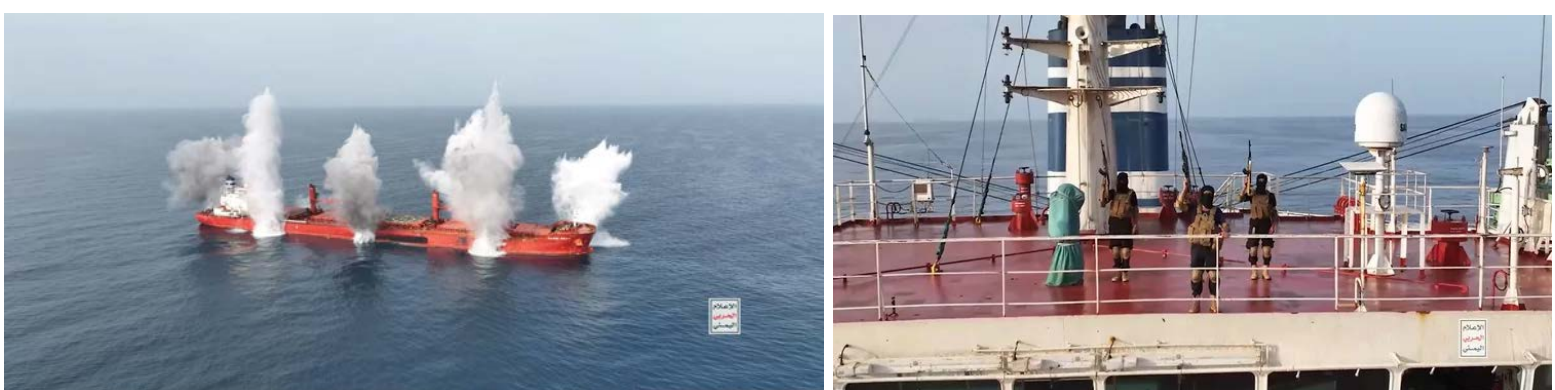
The cover of the newspaper *September 26*, affiliated with the Houthis, featuring an octopus wearing a kippah on top of the White House, under the headline “How did the Zionist lobby seize control of White House decision-making?” (*September 26*, July 7, 2025)

- ◆ In another speech on the occasion of Imam Hussein’s Memorial Day, al-Houthi said that “the mass extermination and annexation taking place in the Gaza Strip oblige, as part of a religious responsibility, to rise up against Israel and the United States and never surrender to them.” He added that “no matter what the losses, pressures, and media damage we encounter along the way, we must stubbornly stand by our positions and not retract them.” Al-Houthi stressed that “obedience and submission to Israeli-American cruelty will be a loss and humiliation in this world and the next” (Houthi movement’s Telegram channel, July 6, 2025).
- ◆ The Houthis’ political bureau praised the incident in Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip, in which five IDF soldiers were killed in an IED explosion. According to the statement, “Operation Beit Hanoun” demonstrated the high level of strength of the mujahideen, and that it caused “psychological defeat and fear among the enemy.” It was also noted that “Operation Beit Hanoun” comes against the backdrop of “the enemy’s ongoing massacres and its policy of siege and hunger in the Gaza Strip.” The announcement claimed that “Operation Beit Hanoun” and the other operations thwarted the “enemy” and his regime’s gamble on the elimination of the “resistance,” and that “the enemy wanted the resistance to emerge from this war defeated, but it grew stronger and increased its resistance.” In addition, the political bureau stressed Yemen’s continued support for the Palestinian people until “the cessation of aggression and the lifting of the siege” (Al-Masirah, July 8, 2025).

Houthi activity against vessels

► This past week, the Houthis resumed their attacks against civilian vessels in the Red Sea, for the first time since November 2024, and sank two merchant ships:

- ◆ On July 6, 2025, the Greek-owned and Liberian-flagged ship *Magic Seas* was attacked while sailing near the port of Hodeidah in the Red Sea. It was reported that several boats attacked the ship with small arms and that missiles and unmanned surface vehicles (USVs) were launched at it, causing a fire. All 22 crew members were rescued safely (UKMTO X account and Reuters, July 6-7, 2025). The Houthis' military spokesman, Yahya Saria, claimed responsibility for the attack using USVs, ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones, and reported that the ship sank. He claimed that the ship was attacked because it belonged to a company that violated the ban on entry to the ports of "occupied Palestine" and after it did not heed the warnings of the Houthi forces. He threatened that the Houthi forces would continue to operate against vessels that violated the Houthi ban on entering Israeli ports (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel, July 7, 2025). The Houthis also released a video documenting the attack, during which Houthi fighters took control of the ship and detonated IEDs that caused it to sink (Houthi movement's combat media arm, July 8, 2025).



**Photos from the video documenting the attack and sinking of the *Magic Seas*
(X account of the Houthi movement's combat media arm, July 8, 2025)**

- ◆ On July 7, 2025, the Liberian-flagged ship *Eternity C*, owned by a Greek company, was also attacked as it moved west of Hodeidah. At least three crew members were reportedly killed, the first victims of a Houthi attack on civilian vessels since June 2024. The ship sank, and maritime security companies worked to rescue the crew members (British Maritime Trade Organization X account and Reuters, July 7-9, 2025). The Houthis have not yet officially claimed responsibility for the attack.

► Mahdi al-Mashat, the chairman of the Houthis' Supreme Political Council, said they are committed to the freedom of navigation of everyone, except "the Israeli entity and those who support its aggression against our people in the Gaza Strip." He claimed that they had no desire to harm anyone who had nothing to do with support for Israel, and that they had set up a humanitarian operations center to coordinate with shipping companies and prevent harm as much as possible. Al-Mashat stressed that the shipping companies "must obey the instructions and decisions of our forces, and anyone who ignores them will be held responsible." He added that the Houthi forces would continue their activities with the aim of "stopping the aggression and lifting the siege of the Gaza Strip," in accordance with international conventions (X account of Mahdi al-Mashat's office, July 8, 2025).

The pro-Iranian militias in Iraq

► Muqtada al-Sadr, chairman of the Shiite Sadr faction in Iraq, called on the armed militias in the country to disarm and hand over their weapons to the state. He also called for strengthening the Iraqi army and police, for reforms, and for the "corrupt elements" to be held accountable (Muqtada al-Sadr's Telegram channel, July 4, 2025). However, senior militia officials expressed strong opposition to the call to disarm:

- ◆ Abu Ali al-Askari, the security spokesman for Kata'ib Hezbollah, said that "the chatter of the weak is driven by the screams of Zionist-American crimes to abandon resistance weapons in the region." He added that the weapons of the "resistance" in Iraq were intended to defend the country and the holy places when the masses were defeated and Baghdad nearly fell. He further stated that the only one who could order the disarming of the "resistance" was Imam al-Mahdi³ (Abu Ali al-Askari's Telegram channel, July 5, 2025).
- ◆ According to Abu Alaa al-Wala'i, secretary-general of Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, laying down arms out of a position of honor would only lead to humiliation, insult, and remorse (Abu Alaa al-Wala'i's X account, July 6, 2025).
- ◆ In this context, "a source in one of the militias in Iraq" said that the Iraqi authorities had opened communication with the militias, against the backdrop of the campaign between Iran and Israel, and offered them to surrender their weapons before the

³ According to Shiite belief, Muhammad bin Hassan al-Mahdi, the 12th Shiite imam, disappeared in the 9th century and will return to bring redemption to the world.

conditions in the region changed and Iraq became an arena of conflict. According to him, the proposal was rejected almost unanimously, and the senior officials saw the proposal as an “American trap.” According to the report, the militias refuse to accept “foreign dictates” and claim that they have the legitimacy to possess weapons “ideologically and existentially” (Al-Akhbar, July 9, 2025).

► On July 3, 2025, it was reported that two loud explosions were heard near the Erbil airport in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq following the fall of a “foreign object.” A “security source” told the news agency that two drones were shot down by the forces at the US base at the airport, without casualties. Another report also said that a drone was shot down near the airport (Shafaq News; SaberIn News, July 3, 2025). The Interior Ministry of the Iraqi Kurdistan regional government denied reports that an Israeli site had been attacked in Erbil and stressed that “there are no Israeli bases or headquarters in the Kurdistan region.” The ministry noted that a booby-trapped drone crashed in a desert area near Erbil, without causing any casualties or material damage, and assessed that the attack was apparently carried out by a group linked to the Popular Mobilization Forces, the umbrella organization of the Shiite militias in the country, with the aim of creating “chaos and security confusion” (Shafaq News, July 5, 2025). The Popular Mobilization Forces condemned the announcement by the Kurdish Interior Ministry, saying that the accusation against an official Iraqi security institution “is unacceptable, reprehensible, and not permitted under any excuse, especially since it was published in the absence of evidence, which we demand to be presented to official government agencies, if available” (Popular Mobilization Forces Telegram channel, July 5, 2025).

The militias in Syria

► IDF forces detained members of a terrorist squad in southern Syria who were reportedly preparing to carry out attacks from Syria toward Israel in the service of the IRGC’s Qods Force (Israeli media, July 7, 2025). This is the second incident in a week, after it was reported that on July 2, 2025, four Syrian citizens were detained for operating under Iranian direction.

► The “Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – Possessors of Might” announced the death of the organization’s deputy commander, Mohammad Badran. It was noted that Badran, a former Syrian army officer, died of a previous wound sustained during clashes with the “Zionist occupation” in the town of Nawa in the rural area of Daraa in southern Syria (Islamic Resistance Front Telegram channel, July 7, 2025).

►The “Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – Possessors of Might” announced that at a meeting of the organization’s leadership, it was decided to establish a general command of the Front, to dismantle the current political council, and to appoint Dr. Tareq Hamad to establish a new council. According to the Front’s announcement, the establishment of the command is necessary in light of the need to unify the political, operational and media efforts in order to direct “resistance” efforts and make them more efficient and organized (Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria, July 8, 2025).