



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

July 23—30, 2025

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Highlights¹

- ▶ The IRGC spokesman stated that the Israeli defense minister's threats against the Iranian Supreme Leader were intended for psychological warfare and that the Iranian armed forces are prepared to resume fighting with Israel. The Iranian chief of staff also stressed that his country is prepared to deal decisively with the renewal of attacks against it.
- ▶ The Iranian foreign minister held a round of telephone conversations with his counterparts in the Arab and Muslim world and stressed the need to increase cooperation against Israel amid the worsening humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. The Iranian president criticized the lack of effective action by the international community in light of the situation.
- ▶ The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman denied the US president's claim that Iran had interfered on behalf of Hamas in the negotiations for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ Commentary in the Iranian press presented the recent developments in the As-Suwayda province in southern Syria as another expression of the Syrian regime's failure to deal with Israel and warned against Israel's efforts to expand its influence in southern Syria.
- ▶ The commander of the IRGC's Qods Force visited Iraq again and met with senior members of the pro-Iranian Shiite militias. The visit took place amid the security escalation in Iraq and the parliamentary elections expected in November 2025.
- ▶ The Houthi military spokesman claimed responsibility for five attacks against Israel using ballistic missiles and drones and threatened to target any vessels of companies that maintain relations with Israeli seaports. The IDF Spokesperson announced the interception of two ballistic missiles and a drone launched from Yemen. Another missile fell on its way to Israel.

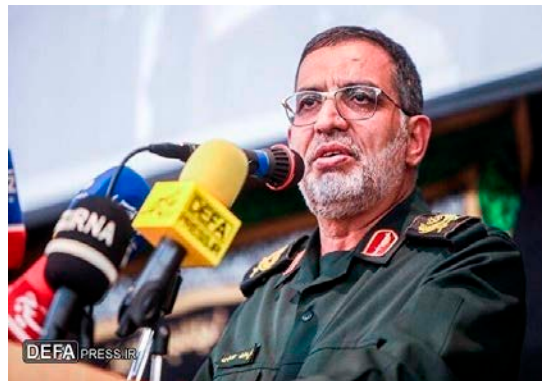
¹ The weekly study includes the activities of Iran, the Shiite militias in Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen.

► The Iraqi prime minister claimed that his country's security forces had thwarted 29 attempts by armed militias to launch missiles at Israel and at American bases in Iraq during the campaign between Israel and Iran.

Iran in the wake of the campaign with Israel

► Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said in a speech marking the 40th day “for the martyrs of the 12-day war” against Israel that the Iranian people had succeeded in demonstrating their strength, resilience, determination, and capabilities to the world in a way that brought everyone to recognize closely the power of the Islamic Republic. He noted that for 46 years, Iran had faced various security, political, and military events and had succeeded in thwarting all the plots of the “enemy” (Supreme Leader's website, July 29, 2025).

► IRGC spokesman Ali-Mohammad Naeini referred to the Israeli defense minister's threats against the Iranian Supreme Leader, saying that these statements were mainly intended for psychological warfare, but the armed forces of the Islamic Republic have not ceased for a moment to increase their defensive readiness. He noted that if the Iranian forces had continued their missile attacks with the same intensity, nothing would have remained of the “Zionist regime.” Naeini added that Iran's hard power included defensive and offensive capabilities of various dimensions, which disrupted all the calculations of the “enemy,” and that during the 12-day war, the “Zionist regime” was in a state of despair (*/SNA*, July 28, 2025).



The IRGC spokesman (*Defa Press*, July 28, 2025)

► The Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Abdolrahim Mousavi, said in a telephone conversation with the defense minister of Tajikistan that Iran has no faith in the promises and commitments of the Americans and the “Zionists” and is fully prepared to deal decisively with any possible renewed aggression by them. He said that during the 12-day war, the United States and Israel had used their full force against Iran, but had not achieved their goals,

suffered heavy blows, and had therefore been forced to ask for a ceasefire to save the “Zionist regime” (*Tasnim*, July 29, 2025).

Iran and the militias amid developments in the Palestinian arena

Iran

- Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke with his Saudi counterpart, Faisal bin Farhan, and discussed regional and international developments. He referred to the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the “crimes of the Zionists,” and stressed that all possible tools should be used, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and other international mechanisms, to break the “siege” on the Gaza Strip, deliver basic products to the Strip’s residents, and stop the “genocide in occupied Palestine.” Araghchi also condemned the Knesset’s decision to “impose occupation on the West Bank” and noted that this decision exposes the “malicious intentions of the Zionists” to erase “Palestine” and its independent identity. Both sides stressed the need to take immediate and practical actions to help the residents of the Gaza Strip and stop the “crimes against the Palestinians.” Araghchi also discussed developments in the Palestinian arena in telephone conversations with the foreign ministers of Egypt, Iraq, Qatar, and Pakistan (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, July 25, 2025).
- Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian spoke at a meeting of the Iranian foreign ministry about the developments in the Gaza Strip, saying that he could not bear the scenes from the Gaza Strip and could not watch them. He criticized European countries and international organizations that claim to protect human rights and humanity and do nothing against the “barbaric actions” carried out against the residents of the Gaza Strip (snn.ir, July 26, 2025).



The Iranian president (*Tasnim*, July 26, 2025)

► Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei denied US President Donald Trump's claim that Iran had interfered in the negotiations for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. He said Iran strongly condemns the "genocide" in the Gaza Strip and supports any process that could lead to an end to the "crimes" and alleviate the suffering of the residents. He stressed that Hamas representatives conduct the negotiations most appropriately based on the interests of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and do not need the intervention of a third party. He described the claim of Iranian involvement in the negotiations as "baseless" and noted that it was a distraction and evasion of responsibility on the part of the United States regarding its involvement in the "crimes of the Zionist regime" against the Palestinian people, including the killing of 60,000 innocent people, worsening of the "siege" on the Gaza Strip, preventing the entry of humanitarian aid, and the killing of hungry and thirsty civilians at aid distribution points established by an American company. Baghaei called on decision-makers in the United States to work to achieve a stable ceasefire and save civilian lives by stopping arms shipments to Israel, forcing Israel to stop the "genocide," and allowing humanitarian aid to enter and be distributed with dignity through recognized international mechanisms (*IRNA*, July 29, 2025).

The Houthis

► Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthi movement, said in his weekly speech on July 24, 2025, that the past week was "the most difficult since the beginning of the Zionist aggression against the Gaza Strip." He claimed that the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip feel betrayed by the Arabs and Muslims, who do not fulfill their moral and humanitarian obligations to them. Al-Houthi added that the "naval blockade" of Israel continues and that the port of Eilat has been completely closed again. He declared: "This is the time for jihad, now more than ever. The enemy's attacks have not affected our position. We will make every effort to support the Palestinians" (*Al-Masirah*, July 24, 2025).

► Mahdi al-Mashat, the chairman of the Houthis' Supreme Political Council, called on the Arab and Islamic countries to take a strong and united stance against "the Zionist siege and starvation against our brothers in the Gaza Strip." He accused the world of being silent in the face of "children dying of hunger in the Gaza Strip" and only being satisfied with "weak statements that feed the hypocritical and immoral courts." According to him, if the leadership is incapable of acting against Israel, it is the people who should act in their place. Al-Mashat emphasized that the Houthis would continue to stand by "Palestine and that they are willing

to die for the cause.” He added that “if we do not move now, history will not forgive us, and the future will curse us” (Saba News Agency Telegram channel, July 23, 2025).

► Hezam al-Asad, a member of the Houthis’ political bureau, issued a statement in Hebrew that read: “We will not abandon Gaza. We will not be silent while its children die of hunger under siege. Zionist Jews – you will not have security while our people in Gaza are undergoing mass extermination before the eyes of the world. The blood of Gaza cries out, and we will be where we need to be” (Hezam al-Asad’s X account, July 24, 2025).

Iran amid developments in Syria

► In a commentary article published by the Iranian news agency SNN following recent developments in the As-Suwayda province in southern Syria, it was argued that the crisis in the province reflects the failure of the Syrian government and poses a serious threat to the country’s territorial integrity. According to the news agency, the way the Syrian government dealt with the events contributed to worsening the crisis instead of solving it, and increased support from provincial residents for the separatist initiative with Israel’s encouragement. Instead of taking a balanced and moderate approach during the clashes that broke out between Druze and Bedouins, the government acted in a way that made it appear to support the Bedouin side and damaged Druze trust in it. Furthermore, instead of dealing decisively with armed groups that supported the Bedouins in the province, the government allowed them to establish themselves in the area and began acting forcefully against the Druze, which appeared as an attempt to increase its control in the area and worsened the crisis even more. Instead of listening to the demands and needs of the Druze citizens in the province, Syrian authorities treated them with contempt, and as a result, large parts of the population, who previously supported Syria’s unity, became opponents of the regime. Moreover, the intervention of Israel and Turkey turned As-Suwayda into a focal point of international confrontation and intensified the race to gain influence in southern Syria. According to the news agency, if the Syrian government fails to address the crisis effectively, there is a risk that similar unrest could spread to other parts of the country (SNN, July 27, 2025).

► The *Khorasan* daily newspaper also addressed the recent developments in Syria, warning that the desired scenario for Israel is to turn Syria into a model similar to Jordan: a country whose borders pose no threats to Israel and that curbs the activities of anti-Israeli groups. According to the newspaper, Syrian President al-Shara hoped that, with Western support, he could not only rehabilitate Syria’s economy but also normalize relations with Israel and reduce

regional tensions. However, these hopes have encountered serious obstacles. Israel's recent attacks in Syria have proven that it still views Syria as a security threat. Al-Shara now faces a dangerous path and is forced to look for new solutions to achieve its goals. The newspaper outlined three main possible scenarios for Syria: turning Syria into a federation while expanding the autonomy of the Druze and Kurdish regions; lifting US sanctions in exchange for Syria signing a non-belligerence agreement with Israel; or an ongoing security vacuum, marked by Syria's disintegration and the renewed involvement of regional and international actors (*Khorasan*, July 27, 2025).

Iran's involvement in Iraq

► Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani visited Baghdad and held secret meetings with senior figures in the "Coordination Framework" of the pro-Iranian Shiite militias in Iraq. "Knowledgeable sources" reported that Qaani met with former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki; the chairman of the National Wisdom Movement, Ammar al-Hakim; the secretary-general of the Badr Organization and head of the Fatah Alliance, Hadi al-Amiri; and with the head of the Supreme Islamic Council of Iraq, Hamam Hammoudi. He did not meet with Iraq's Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia al-Sudani. According to the report, the visit lasted about ten hours, focusing on regional developments and the political situation in Iraq ahead of the parliamentary elections expected in November 2025. This is Qaani's second visit to Baghdad in recent weeks, after he visited there at the end of June (*Shafaq News*, July 28, 2025). Another report stated that the Qods Force commander arrived in Nineveh province in the evening hours of July 27, 2025, and conveyed to the Shiite militias a clear message regarding Iran's support for the Iraqi government's exercise of its authority and its opposition to unilateral actions by the Shiite militias. The message was conveyed amid drone attacks that occurred in recent weeks at oil fields in the Kurdish region and were attributed to pro-Iranian Shiite militias (*Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, July 28, 2025). Additionally, "knowledgeable sources" reported that Qaani instructed the militias to show restraint and avoid steps "that would threaten Iraq's security or disrupt its foreign relations," against the backdrop of efforts to bring about an end to the American presence in the country (*Al-Akhbar*, July 30, 2025).



The Qods Force commander (*Shafaq News*, July 28, 2025)

► In this context, Abu Ali al-Askari, the spokesman for Kata'ib Hezbollah, reported that the agreement of “the Islamic Resistance in Iraq” with Iraq’s prime minister regarding the withdrawal of the “American enemies” from Iraq will end in just two months, and despite this they have still not noticed a change in the status of “these occupation forces.” He emphasized that the prime minister must stick to the agreements, according to which American forces must leave joint operations, the international airport, and Ain al-Assad base, and withdraw all their aircraft from Iraqi skies. The statement emphasized that “Islamic Resistance” organizations gave “a broad and sufficient opportunity,” and that the agreement must be honored, otherwise their opinion will “change” (Abu Ali al-Askari’s Telegram channel, July 23, 2025).

The Houthis in Yemen

Houthi military activity

► This past week, the Houthis’ military spokesman, Yahya Saria, claimed responsibility for five attacks on targets in Israel, two of them with hypersonic ballistic missiles and three with drones. He claimed that all the attacks “achieved their objectives” (Yahya Saria’s Telegram channel, July 23-30, 2025). The IDF Spokesperson reported two incidents of interception of a ballistic missile launched from Yemen and an interception of a drone launched from Yemen. Another missile was reported to have fallen on its way to Israel. There were no casualties (IDF Spokesperson and Israeli media, July 23-30, 2025).

► On July 27, 2025, Saria announced that “following the ongoing brutal massacre in the Gaza Strip,” the Houthi forces decided to begin carrying out the “fourth phase of the naval siege on the enemy.” According to him, this stage includes attacking all vessels belonging to any company that works with “the ports of the Israeli enemy, regardless of the identity of the company, as well as any place that the Houthi armed forces can reach.” Saria also demanded

that all shipping companies cease their cooperation with “Israeli enemy ports” starting with the publication of the announcement; otherwise, their ships would be attacked. In addition, he appealed to all countries and said, “If you want to avoid this escalation, exert pressure on the enemy to stop its aggression and lift the siege on the Gaza Strip. Our activities will stop immediately only after the aggression stops and the siege on the Gaza Strip is lifted” (Yahya Saria’s Telegram channel, July 27, 2025).



Iranian cartoon following the Houthis’ announcement of the “fourth stage” (Iran’s X account in Arabic, July 28, 2025)

► The Houthis released a video on July 28, 2025, showing interviews with crew members from the ship Eternity C, which they had sunk on July 7, 2025. The crew is now in their custody. The crew members allegedly confirmed in interviews that the ship’s destination was Eilat. The Houthis also presented the moments of “rescue” and treatment of the crew members, claiming that 11 crew members were rescued, including two wounded, as well as another deceased. In another video, crew members were seen eating together and watching Al Jazeera broadcasts from the Gaza Strip. Additionally, a “Houthi military source” emphasized that the maritime passage is open to all vessels, except those “sailing to Israel” (Houthi Combat Information Telegram channel, July 28, 2025).



Right: Crew members held by the Houthis. Left: Crew members watching images from Gaza (Houthi Combat Information Telegram channel, July 28, 2025)

Financing Houthi activity

- The US State Department announced a reward of up to \$15 million for information leading to the disruption of the terror financing pipelines that aid the Houthis in Yemen over their anti-vessel operations and damage to global trade. According to the announcement, anyone who provides information about entities that finance the Houthis, their partners, and their funding networks may be eligible to receive the reward and even be transferred to another country (US Department of State Rewards Program X account, July 23, 2025).



**Advertisement offering a reward for information on Houthi financing
(US Department of State Grant Program X account, July 23, 2025)**

- A Telegram channel associated with Houthi forces published a poster for mass fundraising under the title “Be a partner in victory in Gaza.” The publication presented a weight in the form of a “Palestine 2” type ballistic missile and account details at Yemen’s Central Bank, to which donations can be transferred in Yemeni rial, dollars and cryptocurrencies (Yemeni Armed Forces “Sana’a” Telegram channel, July 23, 2025).



Announcement for fundraising (Yemeni armed forces “Sana’a” Telegram channel, July 23, 2025)

The pro-Iranian militias in Iraq

Militia activity against Israel

- Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani reported that during the campaign between Iran and Israel, “armed groups” in the country tried to launch missiles toward Israel and toward

bases in Iraq housing American forces. According to him, 29 such attempts were thwarted by the Iraqi government through “security operations,” which he declined to elaborate on. He added that the Israeli government has “a policy of expanding the war in the region,” so they ensured that no entity would have any justification to attack Iraq (AP, July 29, 2025). According to the IDF, there were launches of about 40 drones by pro-Iranian militias in Iraq toward Israel during the campaign against Iran (IDF Spokesperson, June 27, 2025).

Drone attacks against energy facilities

► Ali al-Asadi, the chairman of the Political Council of the Nujaba Movement, condemned the “blatant interference” of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Iraq’s internal affairs and said it was “disgraceful and unacceptable.” According to him, this is “further proof of the legitimacy of the resistance and the need to continue it to defend Iraq” (Ali al-Asadi’s X account, July 23, 2025). His words came after Rubio spoke with Iraq’s Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, and emphasized the importance of bringing to justice those responsible for the drone attacks against energy facilities in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq in recent weeks and preventing future attacks (State Department website, July 23, 2025).

► Following this, against the backdrop of the drone attacks, Iraq’s National Security Advisor, Qasim al-Araji, arrived for a visit to Erbil and said at a press conference with the Kurdish region’s interior minister that a joint investigation committee held a meeting in the province to discuss the damage to oil fields. He emphasized that these acts of sabotage directly harm the national economy and Iraq’s reputation domestically, regionally, and internationally and that those responsible would be arrested and brought to justice (Rudaw, July 28, 2025).



The drones that crashed in northern Iraq (*Shafaq News* and *Al-Sumaria*, July 28, 2025)

Clashes between security forces and a pro-Iranian militia

► On July 27, 2025, gunmen stormed the Ministry of Agriculture building in Baghdad, killed a policeman, and wounded nine other people before security forces arrested 14 of the gunmen,

who were reported to belong to brigades 45 and 46 in the Popular Mobilization Forces, the umbrella organization of pro-Iranian militias in Iraq. “Security sources” reported that the operatives tried to prevent the replacement of a senior official in the ministry and the appointment of another person, against the backdrop of land seizure in Sunni areas around Baghdad. According to the report, the Iraqi government established an investigation committee to examine the incident (Al Arabiya and Asharq Al-Awsat, July 27-28, 2025).

► The US Embassy in Baghdad accused Kata’ib Hezbollah of being behind the attack on the government building, even though Iraqi authorities refrained from pointing to the identity of those responsible. Additionally, State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce expressed concern regarding the role of armed groups associated with Iran that operate under the auspices of the Popular Mobilization Forces, including groups designated as terrorist organizations by the US. She added that these groups are involved in illegal, destabilizing, and violent activities that harm Iraq’s sovereignty and threaten regional stability (Asharq Al-Awsat, July 28, 2025).

► Kata’ib Hezbollah denied any involvement in the incident and claimed that the event constitutes an escalation that serves Iraq’s enemies and is driven by malicious agendas seeking to split the ranks among national forces in Iraq and push them to fight each other (Kata’ib Hezbollah Telegram channel, July 28, 2025).