



# Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

February 11-18, 2026

Editor: Dr. Raz Zimmt



## Highlights<sup>1</sup>

- The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council met in Qatar with a Hamas delegation and discussed developments in the Palestinian arena.
- Iran's ambassador to Beirut held farewell meetings with senior Lebanese officials ahead of the conclusion of his mission in Lebanon. He stated that the suspension of direct flights between Iran and Lebanon harms Lebanon.
- Iran's permanent representative to the UN again criticized Israel's ongoing military activity in southern Syria.
- The Iranian foreign minister discussed regional developments and bilateral relations with his Iraqi counterpart.
- Reports indicate closer ties between the Houthis and Iran and al-Qaeda branches in Yemen and Somalia, including the smuggling of weapons and joint training.

## Iran and the Palestinian Arena

- Ali Larijani, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, met in Qatar with a Hamas delegation headed by Mohammad Darwish, chairman of the organization's Shura Council. The parties discussed developments in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, and the broader region. Larijani updated the Hamas delegation on recent developments concerning Iran and the negotiations with the United States and emphasized Iran's continued support for the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian struggle in all arenas and international forums. He also expressed appreciation for the Palestinian people's "resistance" during this sensitive period. Darwish emphasized Hamas' support for Iran and stated that any attack against Iran would constitute a threat to regional security and stability (snn.ir, February 11, 2026).

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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.



**Larijani's meeting with Mohammad Darwish (snn.ir, February 11, 2026)**

► During his visit to Geneva, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with Red Cross President Mirjana Spoljaric. Araghchi stressed the responsibility of the international community to address the “ongoing grave violations of international humanitarian law in West Asia by the Zionist regime” (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, February 16, 2026).

## Iran and the Lebanese Arena

► Iran’s ambassador to Beirut, Mojtaba Amani, held farewell meetings with senior Lebanese government officials ahead of the end of his mission. He met with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji and discussed developments in Lebanon and the region and bilateral relations (ISNA, February 11, 2026).



**Meeting between the Iranian ambassador and the president of Lebanon (ISNA, February 11, 2026)**

► In an interview with the Lebanese Al-Manar network marking the end of his term, Amani stated that relations between Iran and Lebanon are strong and based on mutual understanding despite attempts to sever ties between them. He expressed hope that Lebanon would preserve its independence and freedom and would not succumb to the pressures of the “enemy.” He said that the first telephone call he received upon arriving in Beirut was from former Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah, and that the conversation helped him understand Lebanese politics and

how to engage with the various forces and currents in the country. He added that he intends to publish memoirs of his diplomatic experience in Lebanon. The ambassador further stated that the suspension of direct flights between Iran and Lebanon is unrelated to Israeli threats and that Israel is unable to attack Beirut International Airport due to established rules and arrangements, and that such an action would be met with a response. He argued that the suspension of flights harms Lebanon and that efforts to renew them are ongoing (IRNA, February 11, 2026).

## Iran and the Syrian Arena

► Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani, stated during a UN Security Council session on developments in Syria that Israel's ongoing occupation of Syrian territory and its military activity in southern Syria continue to constitute a direct threat to regional stability and peace. He said that the Security Council must act to compel Israel to cease its "violation" of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Iravani added that expanding the authority of the Syrian government to areas formerly under Kurdish control represents a major step toward reducing tensions, restoring Syria's territorial integrity, and strengthening state institutions. However, he emphasized the need to fully guarantee the rights of all Syrian citizens and protect religious and ethnic minorities. He also expressed concern over the continued activity of ISIS throughout Syria and stressed the need to repatriate foreign fighters who operated under ISIS and their families to their countries of origin (Tasnim, February 14, 2026).



**Iran's permanent representative to the UN (Tasnim, February 14, 2026)**

## Iran and the Iraqi Arena

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held a telephone conversation with his Iraqi counterpart, Fuad Hussein. The two discussed relations between Iran and Iraq and emphasized the importance of continued consultations at various levels to further expand relations in all areas of mutual interest. They also discussed recent regional developments. Araghchi expressed appreciation for the efforts of regional states, including Iraq, to promote peace and stability in the region and updated his

counterpart on developments related to negotiations between Iran and the United States (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, February 14, 2026).

## The Houthis in Yemen

► Houthi movement leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi congratulated Iran on the anniversary of the establishment of the Islamic Republic. He claimed that the Islamic Revolution established a system free from “American hegemony” that has remained steadfast in the face of “Zionist conspiracies” for 47 years, while adhering to its principles, including support for the oppressed, particularly the Palestinian people and their just cause, and an “unwavering aspiration” to strengthen Islamic brotherhood and cooperation among Muslim peoples in the region. Al-Houthi sharply criticized Israeli “aggression” and “brutal crimes” in the Gaza Strip and linked Israel’s actions to revelations in the Jeffrey Epstein affair. He emphasized that the Islamic nation must lead humanity in confronting “Zionist tyranny” and show greater awareness and concern in supporting the Palestinian people and their mujahideen in confronting the “Israeli enemy and its American partner” (Al-Masirah, February 11, 2026).

► In another speech marking the beginning of Ramadan, al-Houthi claimed that the “Israeli enemy” spreads destruction, conducts displacement operations, and seeks to annex the West Bank and end the Palestinian presence there while denying all previous agreements. According to him, Israel is doing so through gangs expanding their activity in those areas, while continuing its “killing campaign” in the Gaza Strip and tightening the siege on the Palestinian people there. He further alleged that Israel is recruiting “traitors” in the Gaza Strip and that gangs operating on its behalf are openly committing crimes there. He added that Israel continues its “violations” in Lebanon and Syria in cooperation with the Americans, who are now also focusing on Iran (Saba, February 13, 2026).

### The Houthis' Ties with al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab

► It was reported that a senior operative in al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda’s branch in the Horn of Africa operating in Somalia, was killed in a drone strike in al-Mahra Province in central Yemen on February 12, 2026. According to reports, no party claimed responsibility for the strike, but an examination of the scene suggests it was conducted by the United States. The senior operative, reportedly named Jibril Jamaali or Abd al-Shakur Yahya Ali, held a Yemeni passport under a third name and was responsible for coordinating and transferring weapons between al-Shabaab, the Houthis, and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), with assistance from Iranian elements. The strike reportedly occurred amid reports revealing that the quadrilateral relationship between Iran, the Houthis, al-Shabaab, and AQAP has recently expanded significantly, including the smuggling of advanced

weapons to Somalia, joint training, and the transfer of drone production capabilities from Houthi-controlled Yemen to al-Shabaab in Somalia (Yemen Daily News, February 15, 2026; Yemen Online, February 16, 2026).