

Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

May 13-20, 2026

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Highlights¹

- ▶ Senior Iranian officials strongly condemned the elimination of the head of Hamas' military wing, Izz al-Din al-Haddad, in the Gaza Strip and emphasized that his death would not harm the path of the "resistance" until the "elimination" of Israel.
- ▶ In a statement marking Nakba Day, the Iranian Foreign Ministry emphasized its country's support for the Palestinian people's right "to resist occupation and apartheid" and for the right of return of Palestinian refugees.
- ▶ Senior Iranian officials reiterated Tehran's demand for an end to the war in Lebanon as part of its proposal to end the war with the United States. The Houthi leader claimed that Hezbollah's "resistance" operations are "legitimate."
- ▶ Iran welcomed the formation of the new government in Iraq headed by Ali al-Zaidi.
- ▶ The US Department of Justice announced that a senior official in the Kata'ib Hezbollah militia in Iraq was arrested and charged with involvement in attacks against Jewish and American targets in retaliation for the war in Iran.

Iran and the Militias amid Developments in the Palestinian Arena

- ▶ Senior Iranian officials condemned the elimination of the head of Hamas' military wing, Izz al-Din al-Haddad, in an Israeli strike in the Gaza Strip:²
 - ◆ An Iranian Foreign Ministry statement noted that "this terrorist act" and similar assassinations are part of "Israel's criminal plan for the colonialist erasure of Palestine," and that the US – as the largest military, financial, and political supporter of the "Zionist regime" – is complicit in each of these "crimes." It was further noted that the "cowardly assassination" of Palestinian leaders is a clear sign of the distress and helplessness of a regime that, despite committing the "most horrific crimes and killing hundreds of thousands of innocent people"

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

² For further information on the elimination and other reactions in the "resistance axis," see the Amit Institute's study from May 18, 2026, "[Elimination of Izz al-Din al-Haddad, Head of Hamas' Military Wing: Reactions and Significance](#)"

over the past eight decades, has failed to eradicate the spirit of “resistance to occupation, apartheid, and violent colonialism” from the hearts of the Palestinians, who are now more determined than ever to fight for the realization of their human rights, especially the right to self-determination. The Iranian Foreign Ministry emphasized that the physical elimination of “resistance” commanders will not harm its path and will only become a source of inspiration for those walking the path of honor and freedom for “Palestine” (ISNA, May 17, 2026).

◆ Majles Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf emphasized that the fate of the Palestinian people will be determined by the “brave Palestinians” through the continuation of the path of “resistance.” Qalibaf wrote that the “fighting brother” had dedicated his life to the struggle against the occupiers of his land – whether on the battlefield or in the prisons of the “Zionist executioners” – and even sacrificed two of his sons along this path. He noted that although the years of existence of the “occupiers” of Jerusalem are full of various “crimes and betrayals,” his death during the ceasefire period proves once again Israel’s “violation” of promises and agreements (Mehr, May 17, 2026).

◆ In a statement issued on behalf of the IRGC commander, Ahmad Vahidi, it was stated that “the criminal hands of the Zionist regime” had once again been stained with the pure blood of one of the greatest “resistance fighters,” who served as a symbol of the steadfastness of the Palestinian people. The statement further noted that victory would come through the elimination of the “occupiers of Palestine,” the removal of the “cancerous tumor of the Zionist regime,” and the liberation of Jerusalem, and that the “treacherous Zionist enemy” must fully understand that the iron will of the residents of Gaza cannot be broken and that it will be defeated. The statement emphasized the Iranian people’s unwavering support, especially that of the IRGC, for the “powerful and historic resistance” (Sepah News, May 17, 2026).

◆ Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani also published a message, in which he wrote that Haddad’s assassination by the “cowardly Zionists” proved that the “resistance” is alive and well, especially in the heart of Gaza, and that his pure blood will serve as a source of inspiration for young Palestinian fighters until the liberation of Jerusalem and the elimination of the “occupying regime” (ISNA, May 18, 2026).

► The Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement marking Nakba Day, in which it condemned the “crimes of the Zionist regime against the Palestinians” and emphasized that they constitute “war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.” The statement said that the Islamic Republic emphasizes the fundamental right of the Palestinian people “to resist occupation and apartheid”

and its support for the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland and for the establishment of an independent and unified Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. It was further stated that Iran strongly condemns the “crimes of the Zionist regime” and completely rejects any plan that includes the “forced deportation” of the residents of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank from their land. Additionally, the Foreign Ministry mentioned the legal and moral responsibility of the international community to stop the genocide, end the “occupation,” and prosecute and punish the “Zionist criminals.” It was also written that Nakba Day serves as a reminder of the “conspiracy of the enemies of humanity against Palestine” and the West Asia region, the direct result of which was making the region unstable and normalizing the violation of law. According to the Iranian Foreign Ministry, “the colonialist elimination plan of Palestine” has entered a new phase over the past three years, and the “occupying regime” has carried out a “cruel genocide” against the Palestinians using the most lethal weapons provided to it by the US and its supporters in the West (Tasnim, May 15, 2026).

- ▶ In a speech at a ceremony marking Nakba Day, Iran’s Ambassador to the UN, Amir-Saeid Irvani, said that the future of “Palestine” should be determined by the Palestinians themselves. He emphasized Iran’s solidarity with the Palestinian people and noted that support for their struggle should not be limited solely to expressions of solidarity (snn.ir, May 15, 2026).
- ▶ The Houthi Foreign Ministry “strongly” condemned the “Israeli aggression and piracy against the Global Freedom Flotilla,” after the Israeli Navy thwarted the attempt by dozens of vessels that had departed from Turkey to reach the Gaza Strip. The ministry stated that this constituted a “blatant violation” of international law and that these actions reflected Israel’s “brutality and criminality” toward “conscientious activists” who had come to support the plight of the Palestinian people. The ministry called on the international community to take a firm stance and act against Israel to secure the release of the activists and punish it for these actions (Houthi Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, May 19, 2026).

Iran and the Militias amid Developments in the Lebanese Arena

- ▶ Senior Iranian officials once again emphasized Tehran’s demand for an end to the war in Lebanon as part of its proposal to end the war with the United States: Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi referred to the clauses of the revised proposal that Iran conveyed to the United States through Pakistan and said that it included, among other things, a demand to end the war on all fronts, including in Lebanon (IRNA, May 19, 2026). Alaeddin Boroujerdi, a member of the Majles

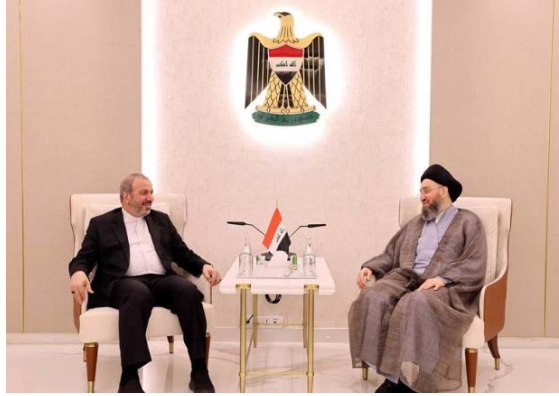
National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, stated that any future agreement with the United States must be an agreement with the entire "resistance front," including Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen. He noted that if the Americans do not accept this principle, there is no point in negotiations (Aftab News, May 18, 2026).

► Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi condemned the Israeli "aggression" against Lebanon and the "crimes" it is committing in the country despite the ceasefire declared there by the United States. Al-Houthi further claimed that, in resisting Israel's actions, Hezbollah is acting within its "duty and right" to defend Lebanon and that its actions are "legitimate" under international law. He attacked the parties in Lebanon that accuse Hezbollah of escalation and call for the organization's disarmament, claiming that they are thereby serving Israel. In addition, al-Houthi addressed Israel's actions in Syria and claimed that the United States is assisting Israel in the "violation" of Syria's sovereignty and in taking control of territory in the country. Finally, al-Houthi claimed that Israel is also conducting military exercises simulating a surprise attack on Egypt and Jordan as part of the "Greater Israel" project, which seeks to dominate the region with US assistance (Almasirah, May 18, 2026).

Iran's Involvement in Iraq

► Senior officials in the Iranian administration welcomed the formation of the new government in Iraq: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian stated that he hopes the establishment of the new government will open a new chapter of strategic cooperation in all fields, based on the deep and historic ties between the two peoples. He added that the Islamic Republic will continue to stand alongside the Iraqi government and people on the path toward development, prosperity, and the strengthening of Iraq's security (Masoud Pezeshkian's X account, May 15, 2026). Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi congratulated the new prime minister, Ali al-Zaidi, and Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, who will continue in his position (Abbas Araghchi's X account, May 14, 2026).

► Iran's ambassador to Baghdad, Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeq, met with the head of Iraq's National Wisdom Movement, Sayyid Ammar al-Hakim, and discussed with him the political developments in Iraq and the region, as well as ways to strengthen ties between Iran and Iraq. Al-Hakim stressed the need for a diplomatic solution to the regional crisis and for an end to the war against Iran. He also expressed hope for the completion of the formation of the new government in Iraq (Tasnim, May 16, 2026).



Meeting between the Iranian ambassador in Baghdad and Ammar al-Hakim (Tasnim, May 16, 2026)

The Pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq

► The US Department of Justice announced that Mohammad Baqer Saad Dawoud al-Saadi, a senior official in Kata'ib Hezbollah and the IRGC, had been arrested in Turkey and extradited to the US on charges of involvement in nearly twenty terrorist attacks, some of which were carried out in Europe and the United States in retaliation for the war in Iran. According to the announcement, al-Saadi was involved in attacks carried out against Jewish and American targets in the United States, Europe, and Canada in recent months, and in planning additional attacks in the United States against Jewish and other institutions.³ It was further claimed that he was close to the former commander of the Qods Force, Qasem Soleimani (US Department of Justice, May 15, 2026).



Al-Saadi with Qassem Soleimani (US Department of Justice, May 15, 2026)

► In response to the American announcement, Kata'ib Hezbollah spokesman Abu Mujahid al-Assaf denied that al-Saadi is a member of the organization but promised that he would return to his homeland “with his head held high,” since he is a supporter of the “resistance.” The statement further noted that the organization is aware that most US and Israeli reconnaissance and intelligence operations in Iraq originate from Jordan and that the Jordanian government should learn a lesson

³ For further information, see the ITIC’s study from March 18, 2026, “[The Iran-Israel War: Possible Iranian-Orchestrated Attacks against Israeli and Jewish Targets](#)”

from what occurred in the recent war, “because patience is running out.” In addition, the statement said that, based on information received by the militia, the United States and Israel are planning to launch a new “aggression” against the forces of the “Islamic Resistance,” and therefore both countries will bear responsibility for any harm caused to “the people of Iraq” (Kata'ib Hezbollah Telegram channel, May 18, 2026).