



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

July 15—22, 2026

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Key Trends

- ▶ Iran and the pro-Iranian militias hailed the election of Khalil al-Hayya as Hamas leader, describing it as an achievement for the Axis of Resistance.
- ▶ The Iranian leadership continues to emphasize its support for all components of the Axis of Resistance.
- ▶ Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi's visit to the United States was perceived as a challenge to Iranian influence in Iraq.
- ▶ The pro-Iranian militias are preparing for escalation due to the confrontation between Iran and the United States.

Highlights¹

- ▶ Senior Iranian officials congratulated Khalil al-Hayya on his election as Hamas' new head of the political bureau and reiterated Iran's continued support for the Palestinians. The pro-Iranian militias also welcomed his appointment.
- ▶ An Iranian member of parliament warned that if Syria's president confronts Hezbollah, it will accelerate Syria's "liberation" by the "resistance."
- ▶ The commander of the Qods Force declared that the Axis of Resistance would continue to flourish under the leadership of Mojtaba Khamenei.
- ▶ The advisor to Iran's Supreme Leader sharply criticized the Iraqi Prime Minister's visit to the United States during the mourning ceremonies following the death of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.
- ▶ The Houthis and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq threatened to intensify their attacks if the United States targets Iran's energy infrastructure. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq announced a \$10 million reward for the assassination of President Donald Trump.
- ▶ The Houthis declared a maritime embargo against Saudi Arabia in response to the Saudi blockade imposed on their territories in Yemen.

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

Iran and the Militias amid Developments in the Palestinian Arena

► Iran and the Shiite militias of the Axis of Resistance congratulated Khalil al-Hayya on his election as the new head of Hamas' political bureau, emphasizing that his appointment constituted "proof of the victory of the resistance":²

- ◆ Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi sent a congratulatory message to al-Hayya, writing that the struggle, faith, and steadfastness demonstrated by the Palestinian leadership, fighters, and people constitute the key to victory in the struggle to liberate "Palestine." He added that Hamas' internal elections, conducted under the difficult conditions of the "siege" and amid the continued "crimes of the occupying Zionist regime" against the Palestinian people, represented a significant achievement for the movement. Araghchi reaffirmed Iran's firm, continued support for the Palestinian people's struggle to free themselves from the "occupation, apartheid, and colonialism of the Zionist regime" and wished al-Hayya success in continuing "the path of jihad and resistance until the liberation of the holy land of Palestine and Jerusalem and the achievement of the Palestinian people's fundamental rights, foremost among them the right to self-determination" (Fars, July 20, 2026).
- ◆ Qods Force Commander Esmail Qaani also issued a congratulatory message to al-Hayya, stating that his election demonstrates the continuity of the path of the "Islamic resistance." Qaani added that the "Zionist regime" has been compelled to acknowledge that despite all the "crimes" it has committed, it has not only failed to halt the "resistance," but it is now stronger than ever and continues along its honorable and proud path (IRNA, July 20, 2026).
- ◆ The political bureau of the Houthi movement congratulated Hamas on al-Hayya's election. In a statement, it expressed confidence that his appointment would "increase the brilliance, strength, and resilience of the Palestinian resistance," noting that al-Hayya is among the Palestinian leaders who emerged from the suffering, pain, and aspirations of the Palestinian people. The statement added that Hamas had demonstrated through this election that "the Palestinian resistance cannot be broken and that the Israeli enemy's objectives of eliminating the resistance have failed." It further emphasized that the Houthi movement stands alongside the Palestinian people and their "just cause," and that the Islamic nation bears responsibility for supporting "the steadfastness and resistance of the Palestinian people in light of the

² For further details, see the Amit Institute study of July 22, 2026, "[Khalil al-Hayya Elected to Chair Hamas political bureau – Insights and Reactions](#)"

continued Israeli crimes and the suffocating, ongoing siege imposed on the oppressed Palestinian people” (Telegram channel of the Houthi movement, July 20, 2026).

◆ Kata’ib Hezbollah congratulated Hamas on the election of Khalil al-Hayya. The pro-Iranian Iraqi militia stated that the appointment constituted “a painful blow” to the enemies of the Palestinian people and confirmed that “the resistance movements will continue to serve as an inexhaustible source and an inextinguishable flame on the path to victory” (Kata’ib Hezbollah Telegram channel, July 20, 2026).

◆ The Harakat al-Nujaba movement also welcomed al-Hayya’s election, describing him as “the right man in the right place,” who devoted his life to advancing the principles of true Islam and rejecting oppression and tyranny. The movement noted that he had “offered” four of his sons as shaheeds who died on the path of liberation, dignity, and honor. It reaffirmed its support for Hamas, declaring that “your jihad is our jihad” (Harakat al-Nujaba Telegram channel, July 21, 2026).

► The Iranian Foreign Ministry strongly condemned what it described as “the escalation of the Zionist regime’s military attacks and terrorist operations against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank,” including the IDF strike on July 14, 2026, on a police station in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip, in which the police commander and several police officers were killed. According to the Foreign Ministry’s statement, Israel had “violated” the ceasefire agreement more than 3,600 times since the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip approximately nine months earlier, resulting in the deaths of more than 1,100 Palestinians, including women and children. The ministry further claimed that Israel was preventing the entry of essential humanitarian supplies into the Gaza Strip. It asserted that despite the continuation of what it called “genocide and heinous crimes in the Gaza Strip,” the “Peace Council” had not only failed to act to stop the “crimes of the Zionist occupiers,” but had become a tool for whitewashing the crimes of the “child-killing regime” with comprehensive and continued American support and because of the UN’s ineffectiveness. The Iranian Foreign Ministry also argued that the US administration was complicit in these “crimes” and in the continuation of the Palestinians’ “genocide” and should therefore be held accountable. It called on the international community, particularly the United Nations and the Islamic countries, to fulfill their legal and moral obligations by acting “to stop the genocide, end the occupation, realize the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination, and prosecute and punish the Zionist criminals” (ISNA, July 15, 2026).

► In his weekly speech, Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi addressed the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, accusing Israel of attacking the Palestinians through continued “killing, destruction, and siege” while “violating” all its agreements, including the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip (Almasirah, July 16, 2026).

Iran and the Militias amid Developments in Lebanon

► Ali Khazarian, a member of the Majles National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, warned Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa that if he chooses to confront Hezbollah in Lebanon, it will accelerate the process of Syria’s liberation by the “resistance forces” (Fars, July 19, 2026). His remarks followed the announcement by the Syrian authorities that they had foiled an attempt to smuggle a large shipment of advanced weapons from the Iraqi border through Syrian territory to Hezbollah in Lebanon.



Majles member Ali Khazarian (Khazarian’s X account)

► In his weekly address, Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi criticized the Israeli strikes and destruction in Lebanon, praised Hezbollah for its steadfastness, and accused the Lebanese government of exerting pressure on Hezbollah in the service of American-Israeli interests (Almasirah, July 16, 2026).

Qods Force Commander’s Message of Support for the “Resistance”

► Qods Force Commander Esmail Qaani emphasized Iran’s support for the Axis of Resistance. In a message addressed to the commanders and fighters of the Axis of Resistance, Qaani expressed appreciation for the support extended by Iran’s Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei to the Axis. He stressed that under the current Supreme Leader as well, “we will continue to advance along the radiant and glorious path of the resistance,” a path that the Supreme Leader has repeatedly endorsed and continues to endorse (Mehr, July 19, 2026).

Iran's Involvement in Iraq

► Ali Akbar Velayati, the Supreme Leader's advisor for international affairs, sharply criticized Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi's visit to the United States, describing it as an inconceivable blow to the struggle and efforts of the Iraqi people and as a source of great pain for every Muslim and every free person. In an article he published, Velayati wrote that the very fact that the visit took place on a timetable set by President Trump, whom he described as an "evil Satan" and compared to Pharaoh, Genghis Khan, and Hitler, was incomprehensible. Velayati added that he did not know the purpose of the visit and argued that had al-Zaidi consulted respected religious and other prominent figures in his country, he would have understood Iraq's place in Islamic history. Velayati was particularly critical of the timing of the visit, which took place during the mourning ceremonies following the death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. He also criticized al-Zaidi for responding only mildly to President Trump's remarks, in which Trump expressed pride over the killings of former Qods Force Commander Qasem Soleimani and former Kata'ib Hezbollah leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, saying only that he had not been involved in politics at the time of their deaths (Khabar Online, July 17, 2026).



Ali-Akbar Velayati (Khabar Online, July 17, 2026)

► In the same context, an analysis published on the Asr-e Iran website highlighted President Trump's warm reception of al-Zaidi; the Iraqi Prime Minister's complete avoidance of the Iranian issue during their meeting in order not to provoke either Trump or the leadership in Tehran and the Shiite parties in Iraq; and his evasive response when Trump referred to the killings of Soleimani and al-Muhandis, a response that drew criticism from some Shiite factions in Iraq. The article also noted al-Zaidi's public commitment to disarming the pro-Iranian Shiite militias and his emphasis on expanding Iraqi-American economic cooperation rather than addressing controversial political issues, including his meetings with representatives of American companies in an effort to encourage investment in Iraq's oil and energy sectors (Asr-e Iran, July 17, 2026).

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held a telephone conversation with his Iraqi counterpart, Fuad Hussein. Araghchi stated that relations between Iran and Iraq are deep, strategic, and founded on profound historical, cultural, and religious ties, as well as on the shared interests of both peoples. He stressed that these relations should not be influenced by personal or unofficial statements made by various individuals (Tasnim, July 18, 2026).

The Militias and the Conflict Between Iran and the United States

► According to “three Iranian and regional sources,” Iran has asked the Houthis to prepare to close the Bab al-Mandeb Strait to oil shipments if the United States attacks Iran’s energy infrastructure. In addition, “a source close to the Houthis” stated that the Houthi armed forces had completed preparations to attack vessels by deploying missiles and drones at strategic positions overlooking the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. “Two regional sources close to Saudi Arabia” reported that Saudi Arabia is taking the Iranian and Houthi threats very seriously and is aware of the coordination between them regarding maritime traffic in the Red Sea region (Reuters, July 16, 2026).

► The Islamic Resistance in Iraq announced a reward of \$10 million for the assassination of US President Donald Trump. The organization explained that the reward was in response to Trump’s boasting about “his treachery and aggression in the attack against the leaders of victory, Qasem Soleimani and al-Hajj Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis,” as well as his continued attacks against innocent people (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 16, 2026). In a subsequent statement, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq declared that its forces are committed to engaging in direct confrontation with “the American enemy” if it expands its “aggression” against Iran. In such a scenario, the organization stated that it would attack American interests and bases in Iraq and throughout the region with full force. At the same time, it claimed that it had not carried out attacks against American bases in Iraq or elsewhere in the region in recent days (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 20, 2026).



Announcement by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq offering a reward for the assassination of President Trump (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 20, 2026)

► Reports indicated that during the past week, more than 24 drones had been launched toward American targets in the Kurdistan Region of northern Iraq, particularly against the US Consulate in Erbil. According to “local sources,” no organization claimed responsibility for the attacks, while the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq denied involvement (Shafaq News and Kurdistan24, July 15–21, 2026).

The Houthis in Yemen

► Houthi Armed Forces spokesman Yahya Saree announced a maritime embargo against Saudi Arabia based on the principle of “an eye for an eye,” declaring that it would take effect immediately. He condemned Saudi Arabia for maintaining what he described as a “blockade” on Houthi-controlled areas, arguing that the situation was unacceptable because it was illegal and lacked any legitimacy or justification. According to Saree, the Houthis will not tolerate the continuation of the “blockade and aggression” without taking action and have every right to confront the situation using all “available means.” He stressed that the Houthi armed forces are prepared for any escalation or “foolish act” by Saudi Arabia and warned that any such escalation would be met with a “comprehensive and decisive” response (Yahya Saree’s Telegram channel, July 20, 2026). In response, Turki al-Maliki, the official spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, stated that coalition forces would respond with full force to threats against maritime vessels, stressing that attacks on such vessels constitute a blatant violation of international law (X account of the spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, July 20, 2026).



“A blockade will be answered with a blockade”: Cartoon by Yemeni cartoonist Kamal Sharaf, affiliated with the Axis of Resistance (Kamal Sharaf’s X account, July 20, 2026)

- In his weekly speech, delivered before the announcement of the maritime embargo, Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi accused the United States, Britain, and Israel of being “the primary driving force” behind all the wars and conflicts in the region and of supporting Saudi Arabia, which he claimed acts as their full partner and plays a “destructive role” in the Arab world. He further alleged that, over the years, Saudi Arabia has harmed both the Palestinian and Yemeni peoples through military and political cooperation with Israel and has prevented any meaningful Arab response in support of the Palestinians during the “Gaza war” (Almasirah, July 16, 2026).
- A “source in the Houthi Ministry of Defense” claimed that an Israeli intelligence-gathering aircraft had assisted the Saudi military in attempts to intercept Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia’s Abha International Airport on July 13, 2026. According to the source, the aircraft – a Gulfstream platform designed for signals intelligence, communications interception, and intelligence collection – had taken off from Nevatim Air Base in Israel (Al Mayadeen, July 16, 2026).

The Militias in Syria

- The Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – Possessors of Might (Uli al-Ba's, or UAB) condemned IDF activity in the village of Khader, near Quneitra in southern Syria, alleging that it involved raids and arrests. The militia praised what it described as “the heroic and honorable resistance of the village’s residents to the occupier’s arrogance” and called on the residents of al-Suwayda to look closely at what “the enemy is inflicting upon their brothers in Khader” and recognize its “true treacherous face.” The militia also warned the “Zionist enemy” that continued operations in southern Syria would be met with a crushing response from its fighters (Islamic Resistance Front in Syria Telegram channel, July 15, 2026).