



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

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Editor: Dr. Raz Zimmt



Key Trends

- ▶ Iran exploited the UN General Assembly session to promote accusations against Israel of “genocide” against the Palestinians.
- ▶ Iran is tightening its control over decision-making in Hezbollah.
- ▶ Iranian assistance to the Houthis to consolidate their control of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait.
- ▶ An Iraqi effort to advance the state monopoly on weapons by postponing the timetable for disarming the pro-Iranian militias.

Highlights¹

- ▶ In his speech to the UN General Assembly, the Iranian President accused Israel of committing “genocide” against the Palestinians and stressed that peace cannot be discussed without “justice for Palestine.”
- ▶ According to an unverified report, the powers of the Hezbollah Secretary-General were reduced after a senior Iranian official expressed dissatisfaction with his performance.
- ▶ The Iranian President met with the Iraqi Prime Minister on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session, and the Iranian Foreign Minister met with his Iraqi counterpart. The sides agreed to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the two countries.
- ▶ Iraq suspended Iranian airlines’ flights to Baghdad Airport because of a US threat of sanctions.
- ▶ The Houthis continued attacks in Saudi Arabia, including launches toward the capital, Riyadh. The Houthi leader claimed that Saudi Arabia is trying to draw the United States and Israel into the confrontation and denied that the Houthis had fired at the city of Mecca.
- ▶ The Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council claimed that his country is not intervening in the conflict in Yemen. However, he did not deny that Tehran is in contact with the Houthis, amid reports that the IRGC had helped the Houthis build defensive systems in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait area.

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

- It was reported that the Houthis have a significant presence in Iraq and operate from joint headquarters with the pro-Iranian militias.
- The Iraqi Prime Minister announced that the deadline for disarming the pro-Iranian militias had been postponed from September 30, 2026, to June 2027.
- The Islamic Resistance Front in Syria claimed that Syrian security forces' activity in the Quneitra and Daraa governorates is intended to give Prime Minister Netanyahu a "security gift."

Iran and the Palestinian Issue

► Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian addressed the Palestinian issue and the situation in the Gaza Strip in his speech before the UN General Assembly. He claimed that more than 80,000 innocent people had been "massacred" in the Gaza Strip and that hundreds of thousands had been displaced from their homes. He accused Israel of committing "genocide" using the technologies at its disposal while calling others "terrorists." He added that "Palestine" remains a wound in the body of the international conscience and that Gaza is still a symbol of the failure of international mechanisms to prevent civilian suffering. According to him, resolutions have been adopted for decades, but "occupation and violence" continue. Pezeshkian noted that peace cannot be discussed while ignoring "Palestine," and that stable peace in West Asia cannot exist without justice for "Palestine." He added that "as long as occupation, aggression, and injustice exist in the world, resistance will continue." According to him, despite the "unrelenting killing and widespread destruction," the Gaza Strip demonstrated the people's belief that the "resistance" cannot be forced to surrender through bombs and siege (ISNA, September 23, 2026).



Pezeshkian speaking at the UN with a picture of Ali Khamenei (Tasnim, September 23, 2026)

- The Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a strongly anti-Israel statement ahead of the annual session of the UN General Assembly. The ministry accused Israel of continuing to "commit crimes" against the Palestinian people, especially "genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity" in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The Foreign Ministry stressed the international community's responsibility to act

seriously and decisively to stop the “genocide of the Palestinians.” It further stated that during the past three years, the “occupying Zionist regime,” with comprehensive US support in the fields of weapons, financing, politics, and propaganda, has carried out in the Gaza Strip “one of the largest acts of genocide in world history,” while at the same time employing “the most despicable methods, including the systematic and widespread killing and torture of Palestinians” in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to advance its “diabolical plan for the colonial erasure of Palestine.” At the end of the statement, the Foreign Ministry stressed the need to place support for the rights of the Palestinian people and assistance in liberating them “from the yoke of occupation, apartheid, and colonialism,” which it said had continued for 80 years, at the top of the UN agenda. It claimed that achieving that goal requires immediate action “to stop the genocide, prevent the expansion of the occupation and the seizure of Palestinian lands, deliver humanitarian aid to the residents of Gaza, and prosecute and punish the criminals” (Tasnim, September 21, 2026).

Iranian Involvement in Lebanon

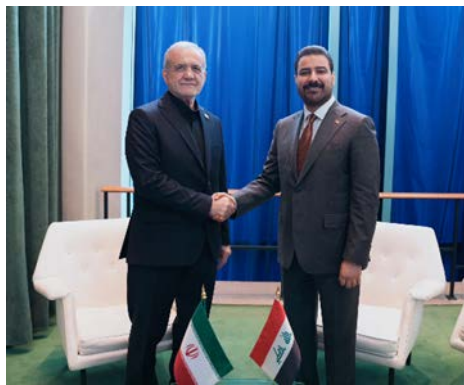
► The Lebanese newspaper Nidaa al-Watan, which is affiliated with the anti-Hezbollah camp, cited “Western diplomatic sources” who said that after the ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel in November 2024, the IRGC sent officers to Lebanon to assist in training Hezbollah operatives, re-equipping the organization, and reorganizing its military structure into more decentralized units. According to the report, which has not been corroborated, Hossein Taeb, commander of the Basij arm of the IRGC and a close associate of Iran’s Supreme Leader, is involved in discussions on rebuilding the organization and supporting its continued possession of weapons. It was further claimed that Taeb expressed dissatisfaction with Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem’s performance, leading to a reduction of the Secretary-General’s powers on sensitive issues. At the same time, a senior IRGC official, Ali Abbas, was given a more central role in Hezbollah’s decision-making processes (Nidaa al-Watan, September 18, 2026).

► Mohsen Rezaei, Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, claimed that the Ali al-Taher Ridge had been evacuated in advance, that no one was present there, and that the equipment had also been removed before IDF forces took control of the site and blew it up (Al Jazeera, September 19, 2026).

Iranian Involvement in Iraq

► Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian met with Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaydi on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in New York. The two reviewed the latest developments in relations between the two countries and in the implementation of joint agreements and projects and stressed

the need to accelerate the understandings and agreements between the sides to realize the broad potential of bilateral relations. They also discussed recent regional developments and the implications of the “military aggression” by the United States and the “Zionist entity” against Iran and its impact on regional stability. The two reportedly stressed the need to strengthen regional cooperation, reduce tensions, and establish local mechanisms to ensure security, noting that the presence of foreign military forces and external interventions are among the factors complicating the regional situation. At the end of the meeting, the two stressed the continuation of political and diplomatic consultations between Iran and Iraq and continued coordination regarding regional and international developments (Tasnim, September 23, 2026).



Pezeshkian and al-Zaydi meeting (X account of the Iraqi Prime Minister’s Office, September 23, 2026)

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein on the sidelines of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly in New York. At the meeting, the sides reviewed progress in cooperation between the two countries in various fields, including the economy, trade, consular affairs, and security. They stressed continued efforts to develop relations in all areas of mutual interest. The two noted that maintaining the security of their shared borders is of critical importance and stressed the need to implement the understandings reached in that field and to deal effectively with terrorist activity. Araghchi reviewed the latest developments regarding navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, including understandings reached between Iran and Oman on establishing safe shipping lanes for commercial vessels. He stressed that the insecurity prevailing in the Strait of Hormuz stems solely from the aggressive actions of the United States and the “Zionist regime,” and that restoring security to the strait requires an end to US actions that undermine security. Araghchi also stressed the need for all countries in the region to adhere to the principle of good neighborliness, particularly by preventing “aggressive elements” from using their territory and facilities to prepare and carry out illegal and aggressive actions against Iran. He noted that the

Islamic Republic of Iran is determined and serious about defending its sovereignty and national interests (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, September 23, 2026).



Meeting of the foreign ministers (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, September 23, 2026)

► “Two sources familiar with the details” said that the Iraqi government had instructed the Civil Aviation Authority to suspend all Iranian flights to Baghdad Airport beginning September 24, 2026, after the US Treasury Secretary threatened economic sanctions against countries that allowed Iranian airlines to land and provided them with ground services. According to the sources, the government discussed the possibility of diverting Iranian flights from Baghdad to the city of Najaf (Reuters, September 23, 2026). Iran’s Civil Aviation Organization confirmed that flights to Baghdad would be canceled beginning September 24, 2026 (Tasnim, September 23, 2026). Najaf Airport director Hussein al-Muhanna noted that no decision had yet been received from the government or the aviation authority regarding the flights and that the airport authorities would comply with any decision. A senior official in Iraq’s tourism sector said that Iranian airlines operate about 50 daily flights to Iraq and that the decision would mainly affect tourists, students, and patients traveling for medical treatment (Shafaq News, September 23, 2026).

The Houthis in Yemen

► Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for two “successful” attacks against targets in Saudi Arabia, in the capital Riyadh and at Saudi Aramco facilities in the city of Yanbu, using a large number of ballistic missiles and drones (Yahya Saree’s Telegram channel, September 19, 2026). Turki al-Maliki, spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, confirmed that a ballistic missile launched by the Houthis toward Riyadh had been intercepted and that additional attacks against other cities had also been thwarted (X account of the Saudi-led coalition forces, September 19, 2026).

► Houthi movement leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi praised Houthi forces in his weekly speech for the “great victories” they had achieved in the confrontation with the “unjust Saudi aggression.” Al-

Houthi attacked the leaders of “most governments and regimes” for failing to assist the Palestinians in their struggle and for supporting Israel, which he said posed the real danger to the holy sites, amid accusations that the Houthis had fired toward the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. He accused Saudi Arabia of intercepting drones launched toward Israel, giving Israel access to Saudi airfields for intelligence collection, sharing intelligence with Israel, and taking part in US attacks against the Houthis (Almasirah, September 17, 2026).

► In another speech marking the anniversary of the “September 21 Revolution” (the Houthi takeover of Sanaa in 2014), al-Houthi claimed that Saudi Arabia is trying to enlist the United States and Israel in the confrontation with the Houthis, but they are preoccupied with the regional confrontation in the Middle East, which poses a significant problem for the Saudis. According to al-Houthi, Saudi Arabia is also trying to bring Turkey and Pakistan into the confrontation, but without success. He reiterated his claim that Israel is the party attacking Islamic holy sites such as Al-Aqsa Mosque. In that context, al-Houthi stressed the Houthis’ continued unwavering support for the Palestinians and their struggle (Almasirah, September 21, 2026).

► “Houthi and Yemeni sources” said that Iranian IRGC personnel and experts had been present with Houthi forces in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait area and had helped them build defensive and early-warning systems in the area now controlled by the Houthis. The sources said that the Iranian personnel assisted in constructing a network of defensive tunnels and establishing radar systems in the mountainous area overlooking the strait. It was further reported that four IRGC experts had recently made separate visits to the port of Mocha and the local airport after the Houthis took control of them, and met with Houthi military commanders serving in the missile forces. It was also reported that maritime shipments of Iranian equipment had secretly reached the area after transiting Somalia and were unloaded by forces on the ground (Sky News Arabia and Asharq Al-Awsat, September 19, 2026).

► In that context, Mohsen Rezaei, Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, said that Iran is prepared to help bring the war between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis to an end and rejected claims of Iranian intervention in Yemen. He noted that Saudi Arabia itself maintains ties with certain groups in Yemen and supplies them with weapons. According to him, cooperation between Iran and the Houthis cannot be described as intervention when Tehran is interested in ending the confrontation, while Saudi Arabia is the party that does not want it to end (Al Jazeera, September 19, 2026).



Rezaei in an interview (Al Jazeera, September 19, 2026)

► It was reported that according to data collected by UN weapons experts, China has become the most important supplier of drone components to the Houthis. According to the report, such goods originating in China are defined as “dual-use” because they can be used for both military and civilian purposes, unlike goods smuggled from Iran, which include disassembled or complete weapons. It was further reported that China was the source of 35 percent of the military items seized while en route to Houthi-controlled areas between 2021 and 2025. The report cited experts who claimed that although the Chinese government is not involved in those trade ties, it is aware of them and chooses not to respond to preserve neutrality regarding Houthi activity (The Wall Street Journal, September 23, 2026).

Cooperation between the Houthis and the Militias in Iraq

► “Iraqi sources” said that the Houthis have a “significant” security and political presence on Iraqi soil. According to the sources, that presence is coordinated with the pro-Iranian militias in the country, Hezbollah, and the IRGC representative in Iraq, Haji Hamed. It was further reported that the Houthis do not have separate offices in Iraq, but rather maintain a presence in “joint headquarters” with the militias in the country (Al-Hadath, September 22, 2026).

The Pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq

► Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaydi said that the disarmament of the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq would be completed by early June 2027, instead of the target date of September 30, 2026, the date set for the withdrawal of US-led coalition forces from Iraqi territory. According to al-Zaydi, beginning September 30, 2026, there would be a 90-day period during which the militias would refrain from carrying out any attacks in return for a US commitment not to attack them. The militias would then hand over their weapons by June 2027. However, “diplomatic sources” said that the timetable is very

fragile and “almost impossible to implement” given the militias’ importance to Iran during the current war (The New York Times, September 21, 2026).

► “Iraqi sources” said that although the Shiite Coordination Framework had agreed before al-Zaydi traveled to the UN General Assembly session in New York to postpone the disarmament issue until 2027, one of the remaining points of dispute was which entity would oversee the weapons after the militias handed them over. According to the sources, the militias want the weapons to remain within the framework of the Popular Mobilization Forces umbrella organization, while the United States wants state institutions to hold a monopoly on weapons and the use of force. A “senior official” in the Nujaba Movement noted that the decision on disarmament was not solely an Iraqi issue but “comes under direct US pressure,” alongside Israeli pressure to end the militias’ role. He clarified that US sanctions would not change the militia’s position on disarmament (Al-Akhbar, September 23, 2026).

► The Ashab al-Kahf (“Companions of the Cave”) militia, which is affiliated with the Nujaba Movement, accused the “enemies of Islam” of mobilizing their media outlets to portray weapons as the main cause of the suffering of the “Axis” countries that oppose the United States and Israel. Accordingly, the militia made it clear that the “regulation” of weapons is an Iraqi national project and would take place only after all foreign forces withdraw from Iraqi territory (Ashab al-Kahf Telegram channel, September 21, 2026).

Syria

► The Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – Possessors of Might (Uli al-Ba’s, UAB) warned the population “throughout southern Syria, especially in the Quneitra governorate and the western Daraa countryside,” of activity by Syrian security forces in the near future. According to the militia, that activity is the product of “deals and understandings” that constitute a “security gift” to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to strengthen his political standing. It further claimed that to justify the activity, accusations would be made against the local population regarding affiliation with the militia or with terrorist organizations such as ISIS. The militia called on residents to take electronic and physical precautions as preventive measures and to report to it anyone suspected of collaborating with Syrian and Israeli security forces (Islamic Resistance Front in Syria Telegram channel, September 18, 2026).