



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

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Highlights¹

- ▶ The chairman of Iran's "Intifada and International Quds Day Headquarters" claimed that the view of the founder of the Islamic Revolution, who characterized Israel as a "cancerous tumor," has now spread throughout the world and that the Palestinian issue has become the main issue on the international agenda.
- ▶ Iran's ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, concluded his term in Beirut and returned to Iran. Mohammad-Reza Raouf Sheibani was appointed to serve a second term as ambassador to Lebanon.
- ▶ IRGC officers are reportedly leading Hezbollah's preparations for the possibility of an Israeli attack and a US strike against Iran.
- ▶ It was claimed that the senior Shiite cleric in Iraq, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, conveyed a message to the Iranian ambassador in Baghdad stating that in the event of a US strike resulting in harm to Iran's Supreme Leader, he would issue a fatwa calling for jihad against US forces in Iraq.
- ▶ The Houthi leadership condemned remarks by the US ambassador to Israel regarding "Greater Israel" and called on Muslim states to act jointly against the "existential threat."
- ▶ The Houthis have reportedly raised their level of alert in preparation for a possible US strike on Iran and are preparing to employ advanced weapons. A pro-Iranian Shiite militia in Iraq unveiled an underground facility containing drones.

Iran and the Palestinian Arena

- ▶ Ramazan Sharif, chairman of Iran's "Intifada and International Quds Day Headquarters," stated that he believes the Iranian public will participate in International Quds Day marches, scheduled for the last Friday of Ramadan, with greater enthusiasm than in the past because they see themselves as part of the Palestinian people and the "resistance front" working to liberate Jerusalem. He added that the view of the founder of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who described the "Zionist regime" as a "cancer," has now spread worldwide. According to him, global public opinion has come to recognize the "Zionist regime" as a "cancerous tumor." Sharif claimed that

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

anyone examining Israel’s capabilities acknowledges that it has failed to achieve any of its declared objectives and that Hamas still exists, and its leaders remain determined to liberate Jerusalem. He emphasized that, ahead of International Quds Day, increased activity can be observed around the Palestinian issue. According to Sharif, many efforts were made to sideline the Palestinian issue, but it has now become the central issue worldwide, representing Israel’s greatest failure. Referring to Israel’s alleged efforts to implement its “expansion plan from the Nile to the Euphrates,” Sharif claimed that although Israel continues to repeat this slogan, its main objective is to preserve the 27,000 square kilometers it has “occupied” (ISNA, February 23, 2026).



Ramazan Sharif (ISNA, February 23, 2026)

Iran and the Lebanese Arena

► Iran’s ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, concluded his term in Beirut on February 19, 2026, and returned to Iran. He stated that the “inseparable spiritual bond with the great Lebanese people” would continue even after his departure. Referring to his injury in the pager attack in Lebanon on September 17, 2024, in which he lost an eye, Amani wrote that although he carries in his body the “scar of aggression committed by our enemy,” the scenes of Lebanon’s recovery strengthened his belief in the resilience of the proud Lebanese people. He noted that during his tenure, based on the spirit of the “golden triangle: army, people, and resistance,” he worked to strengthen relations with official, religious, political, and military actors, as well as diplomats and media figures, and with senior Lebanese officials, first and foremost among them former Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah. He also claimed to have promoted trade between Iran and Lebanon, implemented bilateral agreements, especially in the fields of health and culture, and advanced projects, particularly in the energy sector (Amani’s X account, February 19, 2026).

► Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian appointed Mohammad-Reza Raouf Sheibani as Iran’s new ambassador to Lebanon. Sheibani previously served as ambassador to Lebanon (2005–2009) and has also served as ambassador to Syria, Tunisia, and Libya (Tehran Times, February 24, 2026).



**The Iranian president and the incoming Iranian ambassador in Beirut
(Tehran Times, February 24, 2026)**

► The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, strongly condemned IDF strikes in the Beqaa Valley and the Ein al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp near Sidon, in which eight Hezbollah operatives and two Hamas operatives were reportedly killed and dozens wounded. He emphasized the direct responsibility of the United States and France, as guarantors of the ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, for the “crimes committed by the Zionist regime,” and called for immediate action by the UN Security Council to halt the “military aggression of the Zionist regime” (ISNA, February 21, 2026).

► “Sources close to Hezbollah” reported that IRGC officers are effectively leading the organization’s preparations for a possible Israeli attack in parallel with a potential US strike against Iran. According to the report, some officers previously served in Lebanon, while others recently arrived due to rising US-Iran tensions. They are reportedly not only involved in restoring Hezbollah’s capabilities but are directly supervising preparations, holding meetings with operatives and conveying operational directives, including to rocket units in the Beqaa Valley (Al-Arabiya, February 21, 2026).

Iran and the Iraqi Arena

► “Iraqi sources” reported that Iran’s ambassador to Iraq, Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeq, recently met with a representative of senior Iraqi Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. According to the report, whose reliability is unclear, a message was conveyed stating that if the United States attacks Iran and the attack results in harm to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, al-Sistani would issue a fatwa calling for jihad against US forces stationed in Iraq (sarie.news, February 20, 2026).

The Houthis in Yemen

► Houthi movement leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi warned in a speech marking Ramadan against Israeli harm to Islamic holy sites, particularly the al-Aqsa Mosque, following restrictions imposed on worshippers. He claimed that the objective is to destroy the mosque and replace it with a Jewish

temple. He also condemned the “daily killing in Gaza, the destruction of buildings, starvation and siege, as well as serious violations in the West Bank and strikes in Lebanon.” Al-Houthi attacked statements by US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee expressing support for the “Greater Israel” plan, claiming they reflect official US policy. He warned that such statements demonstrate that agreements such as the Oslo Accords - which are currently being violated - cannot be relied upon, and that the Muslim nation has no choice but to confront the “Israeli enemy” and strive for its elimination (Al-Masirah, February 22, 2026).

► The Houthi political bureau strongly condemned what it described as “the bloody massacre carried out by the Zionist enemy against innocent civilians” in the Beqaa Valley in Lebanon, which “led to the deaths of dozens of people and the injury of many others, in blatant violation of all humanitarian values and international conventions.” According to the political bureau, the incident does not merely constitute a violation of Lebanese sovereignty but also establishes “new equations” regarding what it termed the “Greater Israel project and the new Middle East.” The political bureau further expressed solidarity with the Lebanese people in confronting the “Zionist aggression and the accompanying American and Western threats.” It also criticized remarks made by Ambassador Huckabee, accusing him of exposing American support for the “Zionist dreams of Jewish expansion at the expense of Palestine and the Arab states.” Accordingly, the political bureau called for coordinated action by the Arab and Islamic peoples against this initiative, which it described as “an existential threat to the entire Muslim nation” (Saba, February 22, 2026).

► Houthi Deputy Foreign Minister Abdul Wahid Abu Ras also claimed that Huckabee's remarks prove the US-Israel partnership in the “New Middle East and Greater Israel” plan. It was also claimed that the goal of the project is to “control the Arab space” and that the rulers and regimes in the region must move beyond statements and condemnations, which are the weapons of the weak, and instead take effective action to defeat “these criminal projects aimed at our region” (Saba, February 22, 2026).



Abdul Wahid Abu Ras (IRNA, February 23, 2026)

Pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq

► Qais al-Khazali, secretary-general of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, met with Abu Alaa al-Wala'i, secretary-general of Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada. The two emphasized the role of the “resistance” in safeguarding security and sovereignty, supporting the security forces, and rejecting foreign intervention. They stressed that defending the homeland and the holy sites is a top priority. They also discussed developments in the regional and international situation, particularly those related to the security and stability of the region, and Iraq in particular, emphasizing the importance of unity and preparedness to confront any potential “external aggression” (Qais al-Khazali’s X account, February 23, 2026).

Militias prepare for a confrontation between the United States and Iran²

► It was reported that amid tensions between the United States and Iran, the Houthis announced an increase in the level of alert at public institutions as part of preparations for a possible attack. The announcement followed a special meeting of the movement’s emergency committee, chaired by incumbent Prime Minister Mohammed Muftah, during which ways to improve the preparedness of various institutions in the event of an attack or other emergency were discussed. In addition, it was reported that the Houthis have increased their readiness through military maneuvers in various governorates in Yemen, simulating American or Israeli attacks. It was further stated that in the event of an attack, the Houthis are expected to use, for the first time, advanced ballistic missiles and drones that have not yet been unveiled. According to reports, they also do not rule out resuming activity under the principle of the “unity of the arenas” (Al-Akhbar and Asharq al-Awsat, February 23, 2026).

² For further information, see the ITIC's study from February 5, 2026, “[Threats by Axis of Resistance Organizations amid Tensions between the United States and Iran](#)”

► A “senior source within the Iraqi Coordination Framework,” which includes elements representing the pro-Iranian militias, stated that there are disagreements among its member factions regarding the nature of the response should the United States attack Iran. According to him, four out of the seven factions in the organization announced that they would provide military assistance to Iran if it were attacked. The source further stated that there is an understanding among the factions that if a confrontation occurs, it is expected to be regional in scope and not confined to the borders of a single country (Al-Araby al-Jadeed, February 22, 2026).

► The Saraya Awliya al-Dam militia, which is considered a front organization with ties to Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq, released a video allegedly documenting an underground site in which militia operatives are seen standing alongside various types of drones (Saraya Awliya al-Dam Telegram channel, February 19, 2026). On January 16, 2026, the militia announced its readiness to operate alongside Iran if it were attacked.



A screenshot from the video (Saraya Awliya al-Dam Telegram channel, February 19, 2026)

► The Sarkhat al-Quds Brigades militia, which is a front organization of the Nujaba movement, threatened that an American attack on Iran would be met with an immediate attack on American sites in Iraq and the region. According to the militia, it is in possession of long-range weapons that it has not yet revealed, which will be the main means of such an attack. In addition, it was claimed that an American attack on Iran would ignite an all-out war in the region, including Iraq, and that in such a confrontation, the militia would seek to remove the American occupation from Iraq "to the last meter" (Sarkhat al-Quds Brigades Telegram channel, February 22, 2026).

► Abu Ali al-Askari, spokesman for Kata'ib Hezbollah, warned that the American readiness for an attack on Iran is increasing and may even develop into a ground operation from the Kurdistan Region in Iraq. Accordingly, al-Askari warned the Kurds in northern Iraq to "act rationally and not to be dragged into a military adventure" against Iran (Kata'ib Hezbollah Telegram channel, February 23, 2026).