



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

April 15—29, 2026

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Highlights¹

- ▶ The commander of the IRGC's Qods Force praised Hezbollah's "steadfastness" in the war with Israel. He declared that Israel failed to realize its goals, Hezbollah won the campaign, and the "unity of the arenas" is stronger than ever.
- ▶ The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson strongly condemned the continued IDF activity in the Gaza Strip and called on the international community to act against Israel.
- ▶ The commander of the Qods Force arrived for a visit to Iraq – his first trip outside Iran since the beginning of the "Roaring Lion" war – and met with senior officials of the pro-Iranian Shiite militias. The visit took place amid negotiations to establish a new government in Iraq and the possibility of renewed war against Iran.
- ▶ The Houthi leader estimated that the ceasefire in the campaign against Iran is nearing its end, and the Houthi defense minister declared they are at high readiness to confront any "aggression."
- ▶ The Houthis condemned the appointment of the first Israeli ambassador to Somaliland.
- ▶ The US administration offered rewards of ten million dollars for information on the leaders of two pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and imposed sanctions on seven militia commanders.

Iran and the Militias amid Developments in Lebanon

Iran

- ▶ The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, welcomed the ceasefire in Lebanon and noted that the cessation of fighting in the country was part of the understandings for a ceasefire between Iran and the US mediated by Pakistan. He added that Iran emphasized from the outset, within the framework of its talks with various regional and international parties, the need to achieve a simultaneous ceasefire throughout the entire region, including Lebanon, and that this issue was pursued seriously even after the Islamabad talks. He praised the steadfastness of the Lebanese people and the "resistance fighters" in the face of the "aggression and occupation of the Zionist regime" and expressed condolences to the families of the "shaheeds of the resistance in Lebanon." Furthermore, Baghaei emphasized the need for a full Israeli withdrawal from the "occupied" areas in

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

southern Lebanon, the release of all prisoners, the return of all displaced persons to their residential areas, and the reconstruction of destroyed areas and infrastructure in Lebanon with the assistance of the international community (Nour News, April 17, 2026).

► The commander of the Qods Force, Esmail Qaani, praised Hezbollah’s steadfastness in the war with Israel. In a message published following the ceasefire in Lebanon, Qaani wrote that the Lebanese people are the victors in the decisive arena of the heroic Hezbollah. He added that if a permanent ceasefire is achieved, it is the result of the steadfastness of the “resistance” in Lebanon and the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to him, there are those who seek to impose humiliation on the honorable Lebanese people, but Hezbollah’s standing proves the refusal of humiliation (ILNA, April 17, 2026).



Esmail Qaani (ILNA, April 17, 2026)

► In an additional message published by Qaani, the Qods Force commander noted that Hezbollah proved that Israel’s claims regarding the destruction of the “resistance” are nothing but lies. He added that Israel has consistently failed in recent years to end the war in its favor and has not managed to achieve its goals. Qaani emphasized that unity and solidarity in the “resistance front” have become stronger and more established than ever. According to him, Hezbollah does not stand alone, and the “resistance front” stands alongside its fighters and will act whenever required to support the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples, making the Zionists regret their actions. He further noted that the unity of the arenas is stronger and more influential than ever in supporting Hezbollah and the other pillars of the “resistance front” (Al-Mayadeen, April 26, 2026).

► A few hours before the ceasefire in Lebanon, Majles Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf spoke with the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabih Berri, and discussed the developments in Lebanon with him. Qalibaf praised the spirit of courage and steadfastness of the Lebanese people and the Speaker of the Parliament, saying that God promised that the outcome of the “resistance” would certainly be victory. Qalibaf emphasized that the Iranians have never forgotten their Lebanese

brothers and see them as part of themselves, mentioning the efforts and consultations of various Iranian officials, including the President, regarding developments in Lebanon and the efforts to achieve a ceasefire in the country. He noted that Iran is acting seriously within the framework of negotiations with the US to force the enemies to maintain a permanent ceasefire in all conflict zones because a ceasefire in Lebanon is as important to it as a ceasefire in Iran itself. In the conversation, Berri reviewed the situation in Lebanon and noted that Israel is committing “crimes” in the country and striving to displace the Lebanese from their homes. He emphasized that any official contact or touch with Israel does not serve the interests of the Lebanese people and thanked Qalibaf for his efforts in supporting Lebanon and the “Islamic Resistance” (Tasnim, April 16, 2026).

The Houthis

► The Houthi political bureau congratulated Hezbollah on its “victory” over Israel and the “consolidation of unity between the fronts.” According to the statement, the organization dealt Israel a “defeat” manifested in Israel’s failure to achieve its declared goals, its heavy losses, and the shattering of its prestige in the face of the “steadfastness and heroism” of Hezbollah fighters. This failure, it was claimed, forced Israel to “surrender” and seek a ceasefire. It was further stated that this “historic victory” is one of the fruits of the unity of the fronts of the “axis of resistance,” which shattered the “Zionist aggression equation” and thwarted the plans of Israel and the US (Houthi movement Telegram channel, April 17, 2026).

Iran and the Militias amid Developments in the Palestinian Arena

Iran

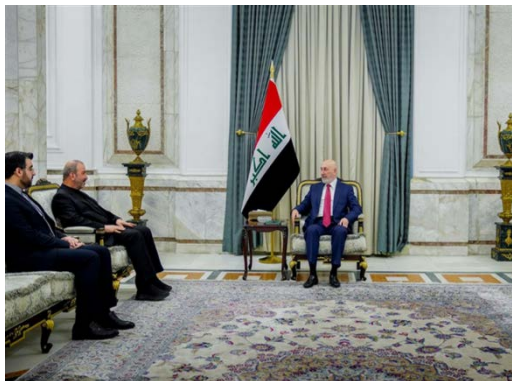
► The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, strongly condemned the “continuation of the Zionist regime’s crimes in the Gaza Strip,” including “the criminal acts committed by the regime in recent days,” in which civilians and Palestinian “activists” were killed. Baghaei noted that since the declaration of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip in October 2025, approximately 800 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli strikes. He accused Israel, in coordination with the US, of turning the ceasefire into a cover for the continuation of “genocide and the promotion of a colonial plan to eliminate Palestine.” Baghaei emphasized the direct responsibility of the US for the “crimes committed by the Zionist regime” due to its continued military and political support. He called on all countries, the UN, human rights organizations, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to act decisively and responsibly to stop these “crimes” and bring those responsible to justice (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, April 23, 2026).

The Houthis

► The Houthi leader, Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, claimed in his weekly speech that there are signs indicating the “Israeli enemy” is preparing for a “new massacre and serious crimes” in the Gaza Strip and that the Islamic nation has a religious and moral responsibility that does not allow it to neglect the “Palestinian issue,” for if it does, there will be serious consequences. Al-Houthi explained that when the battle spreads beyond “Palestine,” other countries enter the circle of fire originating from Israel, naming Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. He emphasized that “Palestine” is the “first trench” in defense of the Islamic nation, and its fall would free Israel to act against other countries in the region. He further claimed that Israel continues to “violate” the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, working to “Judaize” Jerusalem and seize the West Bank, and that these issues concern the entire Islamic nation (Al-Masirah, April 16, 2026).

Iran’s Involvement in Iraq

- It was reported that a delegation led by Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani arrived for a visit to Baghdad for a series of meetings with leaders of Shiite parties and pro-Iranian militia commanders in the country. The meetings were intended to discuss the political deadlock in Iraq, the consequences of the war, and recent regional developments. This is Qaani’s first visit outside Iran since Operation “Roaring Lion” (Al-Hadath, April 18, 2026). An additional report indicated that during his visit, Qaani held two meetings with the heads of the Shiite “Coordination Framework” factions and pro-Iranian militia leaders, expressing clear support for the candidacy of former Iraqi Prime Minister and Iranian associate Nouri al-Maliki for the premiership as the preferred option, or alternatively, promoting any other candidate unacceptable to the US (Al-Akhbar, April 20, 2026).
- The Iranian ambassador to Baghdad, Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeq, met with Iraq’s new President, Nizar Amidi. The ambassador congratulated the President on assuming office and discussed with him bilateral relations, ways to strengthen them in various fields, and developments related to the regional security situation (Tasnim, April 19, 2026).



The Iraqi President meets with the Iranian ambassador in Baghdad (Tasnim, April 19, 2026)

► The Iranian Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, spoke by phone with the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani, and discussed regional developments with him (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, April 24, 2026).

The Militias and the Campaign Against Iran

► The Houthi leader, Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, estimated that the current ceasefire is fragile and nearing its end, after which there is a real possibility of escalation. He emphasized that “our direction” is toward escalation if the “enemy” returns to escalation on its part. Al-Houthi added that the problem of the Islamic nation in the region is the “Israeli and American enemy” and not the “axis of Jihad and resistance” and that the situation in the region will not stabilize until the defeat of the “Zionist project” (Telegram channel of the Houthis’ combat information, April 21, 2026).

► Houthi Defense Minister Mohammed al-Atifi declared that the “Yemeni security forces” are in high readiness to deal with any “aggression” against the “Yemeni people.” He also said that the latest round of confrontation with the “Zionist and American enemy” embodied the unity of the fronts and proved the effectiveness of the military operations of the “axis of jihad and resistance” against the “enemy” and exposed the “weakness and fragility” of the American bases in the region (Telegram channel of the Houthis’ combat information, April 18, 2026).



A Houthi poster showing Israel’s ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, holding a sign with the Houthi movement’s motto under the caption: “Their discomfort with it has exposed the depth of its influence” (Telegram channel of the Houthis’ combat information, April 23, 2026)

► “Sources in Saudi Arabia” reported that pro-Iranian militias in Iraq are responsible for about half of the nearly one thousand drones launched toward Saudi Arabia during the campaign against Iran. According to the “sources,” the targets of these attacks included, among others, a refinery and oil fields in the country. Additionally, it was reported that the militias also attacked the only civilian airport in Kuwait and targets in Bahrain (Wall Street Journal, April 20, 2026).

The Houthis in Yemen

► The Houthi Foreign Ministry commented on the appointment of the first Israeli ambassador to Somaliland, warning Israel against “continuing to implement its plans in Somalia.” The statement said that the appointment of the ambassador constitutes a “blatant violation” of international law and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia, while being exploited by Israel as a “launching point” for activity against Somalia and regional countries. It was further claimed that the Israeli presence in Somalia harms security and stability in the region and poses a direct threat to the security of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Horn of Africa, and international maritime movement and trade in the area (Houthi Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, April 17, 2026).

The Pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq

► The US administration continued to increase pressure on senior officials of the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq:

- ◆ The State Department announced a reward of ten million dollars for information on the secretary-general of Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Abu Ala al-Wala’i, whose men attacked diplomatic facilities in Iraq and US military bases in Iraq and Syria (State Department Rewards for Justice website, April 24, 2026). Subsequently, a similar reward was offered for information on the secretary-general of Ansar Allah al-Awfiya, Haydar Muzhir Malak al-Saidi, known as Haydar al-Gharawi, who is responsible for attacks against US facilities in Iraq and American military bases and forces in Jordan and Syria (State Department Rewards for Justice website, April 27, 2026).

REWARD UP TO \$10 MILLION FOR INFORMATION ON HAAA LEADER HAYDAR MUZHIR MA'LAK AL-SA'IDI

Haydar Muzhir Ma'lak al-Sa'idi, also known as Haydar al-Gharawi, is the leader and Secretary General of Harakat Ansar Allah al-Awfiya (HAAA), an Iran-aligned terrorist group in Iraq.

HAAA members have attacked U.S. diplomatic facilities in Iraq, as well as U.S. military bases and personnel in Iraq, Jordan, and Syria, killing U.S. servicemembers.

If you have information on al-Sa'idi, send it to us via our Tor tipline or text us on Signal. You could be eligible for relocation and a reward.



HAYDAR MUZHIR MA'LAK AL-SA'IDI

Tor Link: he5dybnt7sr6cm32xt77pazmtm65flqy6irivtfrucf5ep7eiodiad.onion

U.S. Department of State
Diplomatic Security Service
Rewards for Justice

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@RFJ_USA

REWARD UP TO \$10 MILLION FOR INFORMATION ON KSS LEADER HASHIM FINYAN RAHIM AL-SARAJI

Hashim Finyan Rahim al-Saraji, also known as Abu Ala al-Wala'i, is the leader and Secretary General of Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS), an Iran-aligned terrorist group in Iraq.

KSS members have killed Iraqi civilians and attacked U.S. diplomatic facilities in Iraq, as well as attacking U.S. military bases and personnel in Iraq and Syria.

If you have information on al-Saraji, send it to us via our Tor tipline or text us on Signal. You could be eligible for relocation and a reward.



HASHIM FINYAN RAHIM AL-SARAJI

Tor Link: he5dybnt7sr6cm32xt77pazmtm65flqy6irivtfrucf5ep7eiodiad.onion

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Left: The ad about al-Saidi. Right: The ad about al-Wala’i
(Rewards for Justice website, April 24 and 27, 2026)

- ◆ The US Treasury Department imposed sanctions on seven commanders and senior military officials in the militias – three from Kata’ib Hezbollah, two from Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, an operative in Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq, and an operative in Harakat al-Nujaba (US Department of the Treasury, April 17, 2026).

► Kata'ib Hezbollah condemned the decision to offer a reward of ten million dollars for information on the militia's secretary-general, Ahmad Mohsen Faraj al-Hamidawi. In the militia's statement, it was said that after the US failed in its war against Iran and its allies, including the "Islamic Resistance in Iraq," it was forced to admit its "ineffectiveness" by offering money for information about the leader. The militia claimed that the "malice and criminality" of the US only strengthen its determination and that this is proof of the righteousness of its path (Kata'ib Hezbollah Telegram channel, April 18, 2026).

The Militias in Syria

► The "Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – Possessors of Might (Uli al-Ba's, or UAB)" published a statement to Israeli citizens amid their "boasting" in completing 78 years on "occupied Palestinian land." According to the statement, the entire world saw the "collapse" of the prestige of the US and its "protégé," Israel, during the recent confrontation. It was claimed that this "collapse" proved that the supposedly "invincible" Israeli army is "weaker than a spider's web" in the face of its "defeat" in the confrontation against Hezbollah. It was further claimed that the cooperation between all members of the "axis of resistance" led to the tightening of the "ring of fire" around Israel's neck. The militia emphasized that the southern front of Syria is about to erupt "like a volcano" and swallow what remains of Israel's dreams, and that it will not reach its eightieth year, but only as "scattered remains under the footsteps of our soldiers" (Islamic Resistance Front in Syria Telegram channel, April 22, 2026).