

Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

May 6—13, 2026

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Highlights¹

- ▶ An editorial in a newspaper affiliated with the Iranian Supreme Leader's office described the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah as a "long-lasting strategic alliance." It claimed that Tehran views any threat to Hezbollah as a threat to the regional balance of power, and therefore, its support for the organization is a strategic necessity.
- ▶ The Iranian foreign minister sent a letter of condolence to senior Hamas official Khalil al-Hayya after his son was killed in an Israeli strike in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani visited Baghdad and met with senior figures in the "Coordination Framework" of the pro-Iranian Shiite militias. The visit took place amid ongoing talks to form a new government in Iraq and pressure from the United States on the prime minister-designate to act against the pro-Iranian militias and Iranian influence in the country.
- ▶ The Houthis denied that they had resumed attacks against Israel after the interception of a drone was reported in the Eilat area.
- ▶ The leader of a pro-Iranian militia in Iraq attacked those in Iraq who support American demands for the dismantling of the militias and the surrender of their weapons, clarifying that this is a "red line."
- ▶ The leader of the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria announced a new campaign against IDF forces in southern Syria and claimed responsibility for launching rockets toward a post in the Quneitra area. The claims have not been confirmed.

Iran's Involvement in Lebanon

- ▶ The online newspaper "Seda-ye Iran," published by the office of the Iranian Supreme Leader, addressed the importance of the bond between Iran and Hezbollah in the editorial of its latest weekly issue. The article stated that the alliance between Iran and Hezbollah cannot be understood within the framework of classical diplomacy or temporary political alliances, as these are relations based on a strategic overlap in the understanding of threats, the definition of security, and a shared

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

perception of the regional order. Therefore, any analysis of recent developments in Lebanon that does not take into account this deep connection will be partial and superficial. According to the article, Hezbollah is not just a Lebanese actor but one of the pillars of the regional deterrence system. From this perspective, the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah is part of a logic of creating a balance against the increasing security pressures in the region. In this reality, any threat to Hezbollah is considered by Iran to be a threat to the regional balance of power, meaning that its support for the organization is a strategic necessity. The article argued that Iranian support should continue in the political, media, and diplomatic spheres and be defined as part of a broader concept of regional security, especially amid attempts to separate the various regional arenas. Ultimately, the developments in Lebanon are not just a local crisis but part of a broader struggle over the shaping of the future order in West Asia. Therefore, Iran's relations with the organization must be seen beyond short-term political calculations, as a long-lasting strategic alliance that will constitute one of the pillars of the regional balance of power in the coming years (Seda-ye Iran, May 9, 2026).



“The strategic relationship between Iran and Hezbollah” (Seda-ye Iran, May 9, 2026)

► Former Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon Mojtaba Amani addressed the situation in Lebanon in a speech delivered at a conference held in the city of Qom, which dealt with the perceptions of the former secretary-general of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah. Amani said that Nasrallah never hid his loyalty to Iran, and when it was claimed that Iran provides weapons to the organization, he used to answer openly that Iran provides Hezbollah with clothes, food, bread, and weapons. He noted that Hezbollah's loyalty to Iran does not contradict Lebanon's interests, since the goal of the Islamic Republic is Lebanon's independence and prosperity. Amani added that Hezbollah managed to operate beyond the sectarian framework in Lebanon and become a central factor in its stability. He also said that the concept developed by the former secretary-general of Hezbollah, Abbas Musawi, which reached its peak during Nasrallah's time, created a basis for cooperation between the various sects in the country against the “Zionist enemy,” and that Hezbollah currently sees itself not only as

the protector of the Shiites but as the protector of the territorial integrity, independence, and dignity of Lebanon as a whole (IRNA, May 11, 2026).

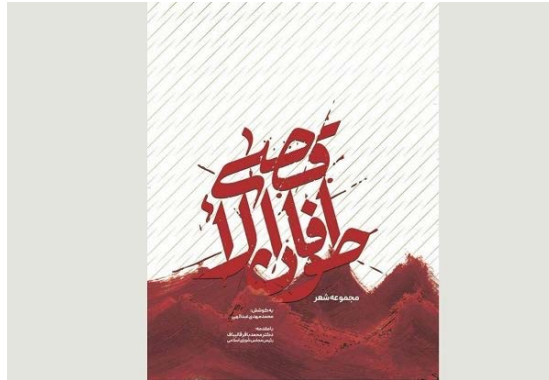


Former Iranian Ambassador Mojtaba Amani (IRNA, May 11, 2026)

Iran's Involvement in the Palestinian Arena

- ▶ Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi sent a letter of condolence to senior Hamas official Khalil al-Hayya following the death of his son, Azzam, in an Israeli strike in the Gaza Strip. Araghchi wrote that the “Zionist regime” mistakenly believes that by committing such “crimes,” it can harm the Palestinian people’s struggle against the “occupation,” but it ignores the fact that these acts not only do not weaken the will of the people and the leaders of the “resistance” but even strengthen their determination to continue on the path of “resistance” until the vision of the “liberation of Palestine and Jerusalem” is realized (ILNA, May 7, 2026).
- ▶ The Speaker of the Iranian Majles, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, praised the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, in the introduction he wrote for the poetry collection “Al-Aqsa Flood.” The collection was published in Iran in cooperation with the Majles’ International Conference in Support of the Palestinian People, and it includes poems written by 110 Iranian poets dealing with the struggle of the Palestinian people. In the introduction, Qalibaf wrote that “Al-Aqsa Flood” is among the history-shaping epics that amazed the world, and during which “resistance fighters” inflicted heavy losses and damage on the “enemy.” According to him, the “glorious operation” evoked deep echoes in the “occupied territories” as well as concern among the regional and international allies of the “Zionist regime,” and caused its most severe strategic defeat against the “Palestinian resistance” since its establishment 75 years ago. Qalibaf added that the book “Al-Aqsa Flood” is not merely a symbol of struggle and a heroic attack against the “Zionist enemy” and the struggle of the “resistance front” in a military operation, but also embodies a symbol of a flood of words, rhetoric, and poetry in the literature of the “axis of resistance.” He thanked the authors of the collection for their activities to

spread the “culture of sacrifice and struggle” and preserve the values of the “shaheeds of the resistance” (ILNA, May 7, 2026).



The poetry collection “Al-Aqsa Flood” (ILNA, May 7, 2026)

Iran-Iraq Relations

- ▶ An “Iraqi political source” reported that Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani arrived in Baghdad and held a series of closed meetings with senior political leaders in the “Coordination Framework” of the pro-Iranian Shiite militias and with the commanders of several militias amid talks to form the new government headed by Ali al-Zaidi. It was also claimed in the report that the meetings focused on the nature of the commitments presented by the prime minister-designate to the US regarding the issue of the armed militias, and that there are Iranian reservations, mainly around the American support that al-Zaidi enjoys. Tehran fears that the new government will allow political and security changes that could reduce its influence within Iraq, especially regarding the issue of dismantling the militias’ weapons. This is Qaani’s second visit to Iraq in recent weeks (Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, May 10, 2026).
- ▶ In an additional report, it was claimed that Qaani expressed Tehran’s opposition to total compliance with Washington amid talks to form the new government in Iraq and the pressures from the US for action by the new government against the pro-Iranian Shiite militias. “Two Iraqi officials” said that Tehran demanded the representatives of the “Coordination Framework” not to vote for a government that harms Iranian influence in the country (Asharq Al-Awsat, May 10, 2026).
- ▶ “Political and security sources” noted that Qaani’s visit to Iraq had clear security aspects, which were expressed in meetings with the leaders of the pro-Iranian militias and with senior figures in the Iraqi government. According to the sources, the meetings discussed the reorganization of the militias and the continuation of security coordination with them, especially in light of the possibility of a renewed escalation between Iran and the US (Al-Akhbar, May 12, 2026).
- ▶ It was reported that members of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), the umbrella organization of the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, are stationed at checkpoints and on the streets of Iran to reinforce

local security forces and assist in suppressing possible protests. According to the report, residents in Tehran stated that people in PMF uniforms “who do not know Persian” are stationed at checkpoints across the city. It was also reported that the “Iraqi forces” initially entered the country in limited numbers in the final days of the war and transferred humanitarian aid, but later took part in securing checkpoints, night patrols, and government rallies in Tehran. It was reported that similar reports were also received in the city of Karaj, where armed Arabic speakers were seen stationed at checkpoints (The Telegraph, May 8, 2026).

The Houthis in Yemen

- ▶ On May 12, 2026, an interceptor was launched in the Eilat area, and the IDF Spokesperson announced that the Israeli Air Force had intercepted a drone launched from the east. According to reports, it was checked whether it was a drone launched from Yemen (IDF Spokesperson and Israeli media, May 12, 2026). A “military source in Sana’a” denied in response that they had carried out any launch toward Israel. According to him, an official announcement is made for every military action “in support of Iran and the axis of resistance.” He added that if they decide to renew their activities to “support Lebanon and Iran,” they will announce it, and that “all talk of Yemeni attacks is an Israeli invention” (Al-Akhbar, May 13, 2026).
- ▶ According to an unconfirmed report in Lebanon, at least 43 Houthi fighters who fought in the ranks of Hezbollah were killed in Israeli strikes in Lebanon. According to the report, the Hezbollah leadership decided to bury the dead in Lebanon due to the difficulty of transferring them back to Yemen, and the Houthi leadership received an update on their deaths (Radio Free Lebanon, May 11, 2026). An “Israeli official” stated that there is no knowledge of Houthis who operated alongside Hezbollah (Israel’s Kan 11 news outlet, May 11, 2026). It should be noted that in the previous campaign, it was claimed that at least forty Houthi operatives were killed or wounded as a result of the explosion of the pagers in September 2024 (Shafaq News, September 19, 2024).
- ▶ A report by the British research institute Conflict Armament Research (CAR) revealed evidence of the transfer of components intended for the construction and development of advanced missiles and drones to the Houthis. According to the report, 800 components were seized in shipments that were on their way to Houthi territories, and they illustrate that the Houthis possess advanced missile technologies, such as modern guidance and propulsion systems, as well as components intended for drones which are much more advanced than previously estimated. According to the authors of the report, the origin of the components is mainly Iran, although certain components were manufactured in other countries and transferred to Iran prior to their transfer to the Houthis. It was

further stated that the components indicate a high technological capability of the Houthis, allowing for the assembly of weapons in Yemen before their use in a manner that “significantly increases” the Houthi attack capability against naval and land targets (CAR, May 12, 2026).

► In this context, it was claimed that on the night between April 11 and 12, 2026, an attack occurred against two Houthi security sites. The first site attacked was a complex in the Jabal Attan area southwest of Sana’a, which is claimed to house Houthi underground infrastructure used for missile storage and as a command complex. “Military sources” noted that an operations room used for communication between Iran and its “regional partners” in Yemen, Lebanon, and Iraq was also attacked. Additionally, another facility was attacked a week earlier in the mountainous area near Al-Mukha in southern Yemen. According to the report, this facility was used for the assembly of ballistic missiles and drones and their launch against naval targets in the Arabian Sea, thanks to the area’s height and its topographical control over the nearby maritime space and the shipping lanes in it. The Houthis have not released a reference to these attacks, and no party has claimed responsibility (Intelligence Online, May 6, 2026).

The Pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq

The issue of dismantling the militias

► It was reported that the “Coordination Framework,” under which many of the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq operate, has appointed a committee whose task is to develop a “feasible” action plan for dismantling the militias and integrating them into Iraq’s state institutions, in accordance with US demands. According to the report, the members of the committee are the head of the pro-Iranian Badr Organization, Hadi al-Amiri; the outgoing Prime Minister of Iraq, Mohammed Shia’ al-Sudani; and the Prime Minister-designate of Iraq, Ali al-Zaidi. The report, published by the US-funded channel Alhurra, states that, similar to previous reports, the various militias are divided regarding their dismantling and the surrender of their weapons, with some supporting the move while others strongly oppose it. However, “sources in the Coordination Framework” stated that the establishment of the committee was mainly intended to provide guarantees to the US in order to reduce the American pressure exerted on the Iraqi government (Alhurra, May 5, 2026).

► In this context, Akram al-Kaabi, secretary-general of Harakat al-Nujaba, criticized statements by American officials calling for the dismantling of the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and the surrender of their weapons, as well as Iraqis who support such statements. He called on the various “resistance factions” in the country to reject these demands and the entire discussion on the subject, especially when Iraq “remains occupied, its skies are violated, and its sovereignty is stolen.” He emphasized

that the weapons of the “resistance” are a red line, and they will not be surrendered “as long as we breathe” (Akram al-Kaabi’s X account, May 6, 2026).

American sanctions against senior militia officials

► The US Treasury Department imposed sanctions on Mustafa Hashem Lazem al-Bahadli, a senior official in Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq, for exploiting Iraq’s natural resources. According to the announcement, al-Bahadli established an oil smuggling unit in southern Iraq and oversaw the militia’s projects while using government contracts and projects as a cover for the militia’s activities. Al-Bahadli is also a member of the militia’s economic committee, and in this capacity, he was involved in formulating contracts for the transfer of oil from Iran in coordination with the Qods Force. In addition, sanctions were imposed on two senior officials in Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada – the former deputy secretary-general, Ahmad Khudair Maksous, and Mohammed Issa Kadhim al-Shuwaili, who was noted to have cooperated with members of Hezbollah’s financial team to purchase and transfer weapons to Iraq (US Treasury Department, May 7, 2026).

The Militias in Syria

► The “Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – Possessors of Might (Uli al-Ba’s, or UAB)” released a video allegedly documenting rocket fire by the organization’s operatives toward IDF forces in the Tel al-Ahmar area, located south of Quneitra in southern Syria. According to the militia, “direct hits on the infrastructure” of the target were identified, and its results were “partial destruction of the fortification system” (Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria, May 7, 2026). It should be noted that there is no confirmation of the claims of any attack.

► In this context, a video was released featuring the organization’s commander, “Abu Mujahed,” in which he announced a new campaign against Israel under the title “Min al-Qawaed” (“From the Foundations/Bases”). According to him, the attack constitutes the first operational action in a series of operations. He emphasized that the expansion of the “Zionist enemy” into Syria amounts to suicide and threatened to escalate the struggle against it if this expansion continues. He also criticized the Syrian regime, which he claimed persecutes the “resistance,” and warned that if “a confrontation is imposed on us, we will wage a major and destructive battle” (Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria, May 7, 2026).



Right: Footage from the alleged launch at an IDF post. Left: Abu Mujahed in a speech (Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria, May 7, 2026)

- In an additional message, the organization denied that it is operated by “foreign powers,” and emphasized that it is not subject to any body, that it is independent in its activities, and that its operatives come “from all corners of the Syrian fabric.” However, it was emphasized that the organization maintains a bond of “brothers in arms and a shared belief in the sanctity of fighting” with other elements in the “axis of resistance” (Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria, May 10, 2026).