

Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

May 20—27, 2026

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Highlights¹

- ▶ The Supreme Leader of Iran, Mojtaba Khamenei, expressed his confidence that “the Zionist regime and cancerous tumor” is approaching the final stages of its existence and will not survive for another 25 years.
- ▶ The Iranian foreign minister conveyed a message to the secretary-general of Hezbollah, emphasizing the Islamic Republic’s support for the organization and its commitment to conditioning any agreement with the United States on ending the war with a ceasefire in Lebanon.
- ▶ Iran reportedly informed Hezbollah that it would provide it with financial assistance amounting to ten percent of the assets it manages to unfreeze as part of the negotiations with the United States.
- ▶ The Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned the decision of the US Department of the Treasury to impose sanctions on Iran’s ambassador-designate to Lebanon and on nine individuals from Hezbollah, Amal, and the Lebanese security apparatus.
- ▶ The commander of the Qods Force issued statements of support for the Lebanese and Palestinian “resistance” on the anniversary of the IDF’s withdrawal from southern Lebanon and following the Israeli Navy’s takeover of the flotilla to the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ The Iranian foreign minister spoke with the president of the Kurdish region in northern Iraq and with the Iraqi foreign minister, discussing developments in Iraq and the region.
- ▶ The Houthi Foreign Ministry warned the authorities in Somaliland against strengthening relations with Israel.
- ▶ It was reported that the interrogation of a senior Kata’ib Hezbollah operative detained in the United States on suspicion of planning attacks in retaliation for the war in Iran revealed ties between senior Iraqi security officials and the Qods Force.

Iran’s Involvement in Lebanon

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

▶ Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi emphasized in a message to Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem that the Islamic Republic will not cease its support for “justice- and freedom-seeking” movements, primarily Hezbollah, until the very last moment. Araghchi added that Iran has set a ceasefire in Lebanon as a condition for any agreement with the United States, and that the recent Iranian proposal for ending the war, submitted through Pakistan, once again emphasized that Lebanon must be included in the ceasefire agreement (Al-Mayadeen, May 23, 2026).



The Iranian foreign minister and the secretary-general of Hezbollah (Al-Mayadeen, May 23, 2026)

▶ Iran reportedly informed Hezbollah that it would provide it with financial assistance equivalent to ten percent of any Iranian assets released as part of the negotiations with the United States on ending the war. According to the report, a Hezbollah delegation recently visited Tehran to discuss possible frameworks for ending the fighting in the region, including in Lebanon (Al-Modon, May 21, 2026).

▶ The Chargé d’Affaires of the Iranian Embassy in Beirut, Tawfiq Al-Samadi, met with the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabih Berri. In a statement published by the Iranian Embassy in Lebanon, it was noted that the two discussed the latest developments in Lebanon and the region in light of “the continued aggression of the Israeli entity against Lebanon and its violation of the ceasefire clauses,” as well as the relations between the two countries (Iranian Embassy in Lebanon X account, May 25, 2026).



Meeting between the chargé d'affaires of the Iranian Embassy and the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament (Iranian Embassy in Lebanon X account, May 25, 2026)

► The Iranian Foreign Ministry strongly condemned the decision of the US Department of the Treasury to impose sanctions on Iran’s ambassador-designate to Lebanon, Mohammad Reza Rauf Sheibani. In a statement released by the ministry, it was noted that the step constitutes another example of bullying and disregard by the US administration for the principles of international law and the UN Charter, particularly the fundamental principle of respecting national sovereignty. Furthermore, the Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned the US decision to impose sanctions on several Hezbollah representatives in the Lebanese Parliament, on senior officials from the Amal Movement, and on several senior officials in the military and security apparatus in Lebanon. According to the ministry, these measures are designed to weaken Lebanon’s national sovereignty and create divisions within Lebanese society, and they represent a continuation of the US administration’s complicity with “the occupying Zionist regime” in continuing “military aggression and committing crimes” against Lebanon. The statement noted that all the various groups and sects in Lebanon will defend Lebanon’s sovereignty and territorial integrity while maintaining national unity, thereby thwarting the goals of “the occupying Zionist regime” in Lebanon. The foreign ministry emphasized in its statement the commitment of the Islamic Republic to strengthening the friendly and historical relations with Lebanon in all fields (Tasnim, May 22, 2026).

► Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani issued a statement on the anniversary of the IDF’s withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000. The statement noted that the liberation of the city of Khorramshahr from the Iraqis by Iran on May 24, 1982, paved the way for the expulsion of “the Zionist regime” from southern Lebanon on May 24, 2000. He added that “the [Zionist] regime’s army fled” while its communication devices remained active and all its equipment was left behind inside the positions, and that the Palestinian and Lebanese “resistance” would also lead to the “liberation of Jerusalem” (Tabnak, May 25, 2026).

Iran's Involvement in the Palestinian Arena

► The Supreme Leader of Iran, Mojtaba Khamenei, wrote in a message addressed to Muslim pilgrims that “the Zionist regime and cancerous tumor” is approaching the final stages of its existence and “with Allah’s help will not survive for another 25 years,” in line with the statements made by the former Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei, a decade earlier. Khamenei further wrote that the weapon of “Allahu Akbar” has strengthened the unity of the Islamic nation and the young fighters of the “Resistance Front” – from Iran to Lebanon, “Palestine,” Iraq, and Syria, from Africa and Yemen to Afghanistan and Pakistan – to defend the Islamic nation against “the occupying Zionist invaders,” will bring about the “Al-Aqsa Flood,” and will leave “the Zionist regime” breathing its final breaths. According to him, the brave fighters and the armed forces in Iran, alongside the fighters of the “Resistance Front,” especially in Lebanon, have managed to achieve impressive victories against the armies of Israel and the United States. He added that “Death to America” and “Death to Israel” will become widespread slogans among the Islamic nation and the oppressed of the world, especially among the youth (Tasnim, May 26, 2026).

► Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani referred to the Israeli thwarting of the “Global Sumud [Resilience] Flotilla” to the Gaza Strip, writing that “the victories and achievements of the Sumud Flotilla continue.” He noted that the flotilla brought down the “walls of falsehood” surrounding Western civilization’s freedoms, further exposed “Zionist fascism,” restored “Palestine” to the center of global attention, and brought the “defeated Zionist regime,” which has intensified its “oppression and crime,” closer to its end (ISNA, May 20, 2026).



Statement by the commander of the Qods Force (ISNA, May 20, 2026)

Iran's Involvement in Iraq

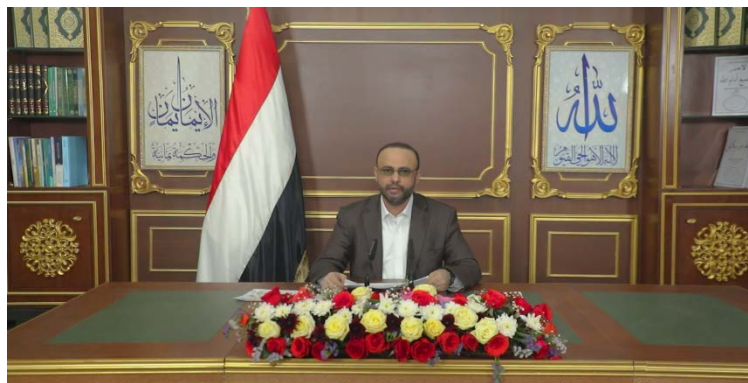
► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke on the phone with the President of the Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani, and discussed regional developments and relations between Iran and the Kurdish region, including economic-commercial ties and strengthening

coordination to secure shared borders and combat terrorism. Araghchi also spoke with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein as part of his consultations amid regional developments (ISNA, May 23, 2026).

The Houthis in Yemen

► Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi claimed in a speech that “the enemies” are exploiting humanitarian organizations operating in Yemen, infiltrating them through local elements, and using them to gather intelligence for the service of “the Zionist enemy.” He added that the intelligence focuses on the location of weapons depots and “sensitive operational areas,” as well as meetings of the Houthi government. According to al-Houthi, these operational cells do not limit themselves to intelligence gathering but also execute operations aimed at damaging Houthi interests and facilities, as evidenced by “confessions” provided by detained operatives (Almasirah, May 21, 2026).

► The President of the Houthi Supreme Political Council (SPC), Mahdi al-Mashat, warned “the aggressor countries and their militias” in a speech on the 36th anniversary of the establishment of unified Yemen against any attempt to undermine Yemen’s unity. He argued that Yemen is under a brutal American-Saudi siege and aggression aimed at paving the way for the partition of Yemen and inciting internal struggles and conflicts. In addition, al-Mashat confirmed Houthi solidarity with Iran, condemned “the continuous violation of the ceasefire in Palestine and Lebanon by the Zionist enemy,” attacked the normalization of relations between Somaliland and Israel, and emphasized the danger inherent in this cooperation for Yemen and the region (Mahdi al-Mashat’s Telegram channel, May 21, 2026).



Al-Mashat during a speech (Almasirah, May 21, 2026)

► The Houthi Foreign Ministry warned the authorities in Somaliland against strengthening relations with Israel, clarifying that these relations will not achieve gains or solve internal problems and will only bring shame and loss. The ministry claimed that this relationship reflects the extent of political and moral isolation experienced by “the Zionist entity,” especially after the “acts of genocide” it is committing in Gaza (Telegram channel of the Houthi Foreign Ministry, May 24, 2026).

► The Houthi Political Bureau issued a congratulatory message to the Lebanese people and the “Islamic Resistance in Lebanon” (Hezbollah) marking the 26th anniversary of the “Day of Resistance and Liberation of Southern Lebanon” (the IDF’s withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000). The political bureau confirmed Houthi solidarity with the “Islamic Resistance,” “which achieved the greatest victories in confronting the Zionist aggression” and proved that “the path of Jihad is the only way to liberate the land and preserve sovereignty and dignity.” Additionally, the political bureau expressed regret over the actions of Lebanese political forces that continue “to gamble on normalization and peace with the usurping entity” (Saba, May 25, 2026).

The Pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq

► It was reported that the interrogation of Mohammad Baqir Saad Daoud al-Saadi, a senior operative in Kata’ib Hezbollah and the IRGC who is being detained in the United States and accused of planning terrorist attacks in retaliation for the war against Iran, revealed the existence of direct links between elements within the Iraqi security forces and the Iranian Qods Force. “Iraqi sources” familiar with the details of al-Saadi’s investigation in the United States stated that an analysis of mobile phones and computers seized at the time of his arrest uncovered information regarding communications between individuals in the two organizations, as well as the existence of operational cells within units of the Iraqi security forces operating under the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). It was further reported that these direct links bypass the security forces’ chain of command, to which the PMF units are ostensibly subordinate. An additional source reported that individuals associated with these operational cells had begun taking measures to conceal their activities, including changing their places of residence, disposing of communication devices, and even leaving Iraq for Iran and other countries (Shafaq News, May 24, 2026).

► In this context, “knowledgeable American sources” stated that following al-Saadi’s arrest, senior leaders of Kata’ib Hezbollah fled Iraq for Iran out of fear of an American response. According to the report, the senior officials fear that the investigations will lead to charges against them or reveal details about their involvement in IRGC plots. According to the sources, maps and photographs of houses used by President Trump in Florida and New York were discovered during the investigation, and suspicion arose that al-Saadi promoted attempts to harm two of the American president’s children – his daughter Ivanka and his son Barron – in retaliation for the assassination of Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani in January 2020 (Erem News, May 24, 2026).

► The deputy head of the executive council of Harakat al-Nujaba, Hussein al-Saidi, declared that the plan to integrate the PMF, the umbrella organization of the militias, into the Iraqi security forces is

an “American plot.” He added that “the resistance’s weapon is a principle we will not compromise on,” since without it, the “resistance” will not be able to protect the land, the holy sites, and Iraqi society from threats. He further claimed that anyone who insists on implementing this plan will pay the price politically and in public support (Shafaq News, May 22, 2026).

► Against the backdrop of attacks attributed to the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq against targets in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, despite the ceasefire in the campaign against Iran, it was reported that a committee of inquiry had been established in Iraq to investigate the circumstances surrounding the incidents. The spokesperson for the Iraqi Chief of Staff stated that any party found responsible for the attacks would be dealt with through military and legal measures, emphasizing that the attacks constitute a threat to Iraq's national security and a blatant violation of its sovereignty (Asharq Al-Awsat, May 24, 2026).

The Militias in Syria

► The “Islamic Resistance Front in Syria - Possessors of Might (Uli al-Ba’s, or UAB)” issued a statement addressed to the “leaders of the Zionist entity and its terrified soldiers along Syria’s southern front.” The militia claimed that Israel's leaders are attempting to conceal the extent of the destruction and losses inflicted on the IDF in the organization's recent attack in the Tel al-Ahmar area as part of Operation *Min al-Qawaed* (“From the Foundations/Bases”). According to the militia, the sense of “failure and helplessness” that Israel experienced because of the attack is driving it to escalate its activities in southern Syria, including attacks on villages and towns in the area. The organization also warned Syrian elements collaborating with Israel and threatened that anyone doing so would be neutralized and eliminated. Finally, the organization stated that the current silence does not reflect a retreat but rather the calm before the storm, as it prepares for a new phase that will be “the most brutal and painful” in the history of its conflict with Israel, during which Syrian territory will become “a hell that will devour Israel's vehicles, soldiers, and agents” (Islamic Resistance Front in Syria Telegram channel, May 20, 2026).