

Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

July 8—15, 2026

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Key Trends

- ▶ **Iran continues to link the end of the war in Lebanon and the withdrawal of the IDF from the country to negotiations with the United States.**
- ▶ **The pro-Iranian militias' opposition to their disarmament poses a challenge to the Baghdad government's efforts to establish the state's monopoly on arms.**

Highlights¹

- ▶ An Iranian diplomatic delegation visited Lebanon and met with the Speaker of Parliament. The Iranian Foreign Minister met with the UN Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for Lebanon.
- ▶ It was reported that a message conveyed by the Iranian leadership to the Hezbollah leadership and the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament stated that Tehran had made it clear to the mediators in the negotiations with the United States that ending the war in Lebanon is its highest priority.
- ▶ Iranian commentators expressed strong doubts about the prospects of disarming Hezbollah.
- ▶ It was reported that the Iranian leadership had acceded to requests by the Hamas leadership to link the end of the war in the Gaza Strip to the negotiations with the United States and to continue supporting the reconstruction of the movement's military wing.
- ▶ Iran's mission to the United Nations rejected US claims that the Houthi delegation's trip to attend Khamenei's funeral was intended to facilitate the transfer of military assistance from Iran.
- ▶ The Iraqi Prime Minister met with President Trump at the White House and stressed that he is committed to the disarmament of the militias once the US military presence in Iraq concludes in late September 2026. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq condemned the visit and stressed that it would not surrender its weapons.
- ▶ The major pro-Iranian militias in Iraq threatened to resume attacks against US targets amid the escalation between the United States and Iran.

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

Iran's Involvement in Lebanon

► An Iranian diplomatic delegation led by the Assistant Foreign Minister, Vahid Jalalzadeh, met with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. During the meeting, the parties discussed the latest developments in Lebanon and the region, as well as relations between the two countries. The Iranian Assistant Foreign Minister delivered an oral message to Berri from Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, emphasizing Tehran's commitment to standing by Lebanon. The meeting was also attended by the Chargé d'Affaires of the Iranian Embassy in Lebanon, Tawfiq Al-Samadi (An-Nahar, July 9, 2026).



Meeting between the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament and the Iranian Assistant Foreign Minister (An-Nahar, July 9, 2026)

► An “Informed sources” reported that Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and the Hezbollah leadership received a new message from the Iranian leadership, stating that Tehran has informed Qatari and Pakistani mediators that ending the war in Lebanon and completing the Israeli withdrawal from the country are priorities equivalent, in Tehran's view, to that of the Strait of Hormuz (Al-Akhbar, July 13, 2026).

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with Jean Arnault, the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon, and discussed developments in Lebanon and the wider region. Araghchi strongly condemned the ongoing Israeli military attacks in Lebanon. He emphasized the Islamic Republic's continued support for the Lebanese people, Lebanon's territorial integrity, and its national sovereignty, as well as its commitment to working toward ending “Israeli aggression and occupation in Lebanon” (IRNA, July 12, 2026).



**Meeting between the Iranian Foreign Minister and the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon
(IRNA, July 12, 2026)**

► Seyed Hossein Mousavi, Head of the Center for Middle East Strategic Studies, argued in an opinion article published in the reformist newspaper Shargh that significant obstacles remain to the implementation of the ceasefire in Lebanon. According to him, there is no guarantee that Israel will not violate the ceasefire again, even if the Lebanese Army fulfills its commitments under the memorandum of understanding between Israel and Lebanon to maintain security in the “pilot areas” agreed upon by the two countries. Moreover, the Lebanese government currently has no leverage over Israel other than US assurances that it will guarantee Israel’s compliance with the understandings. He added that the Lebanese government could have used the memorandum of understanding between Iran and the United States to demand Israel’s withdrawal from all Lebanese territory, in accordance with the text of the memorandum, which emphasizes Lebanon’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, it failed to make use of this powerful leverage because its primary objective is to establish an American-Israeli-Lebanese camp to disarm Hezbollah under US supervision. Mousavi stressed that Hezbollah is justified in opposing negotiations between Israel and Lebanon because it understands that the parties’ ultimate objective is to undermine its very existence. He rejects Hezbollah’s disarmament in any form, arguing that its possession of weapons is fundamentally essential to the Lebanese “resistance” against Israel’s “violent actions.” According to the author, Hezbollah’s disarmament constitutes a red line that Iran and its allies cannot accept being crossed because Lebanon is part of Iran’s deterrence strategy. Despite the professionalism of the Lebanese Army and the public’s confidence in it, the army lacks the advanced weaponry and capabilities required to defend Lebanon against Israel and its “expansionist ambitions” should the “resistance” be disarmed. In conclusion, Mousavi stated that Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon still faces considerable challenges and that hasty decisions and excessive reliance on US promises could impose unforeseen costs on the Lebanese government. He argued that the Lebanese government has placed itself in a difficult position and that partnership with Israel is pushing Lebanese society

toward an uncertain future. Nevertheless, he maintained that it is still not too late for Lebanese statesmen to “stand on the right side of history” (Shargh, July 10, 2026).

► Iranian commentator Saadollah Zarei, who is affiliated with the regime in Tehran, also expressed serious doubts about the ability of Israel and the United States to disarm Hezbollah. In an interview with the IRGC-affiliated Tasnim News Agency, Zarei said that Hezbollah has significant leverage in the Lebanese arena that it could use to thwart Israeli and US plans, including the possibility of bringing down the Lebanese government by mobilizing the public that supports the organization, employing its military power, and exploiting its standing within the Shiite community. He noted that at this stage, Hezbollah is not interested in entering into an armed confrontation, but that if it chose to do so, it would be capable of bringing down Lebanon’s entire political system by force of arms. Zarei stressed that if Hezbollah’s peaceful efforts and struggle fail, the stage will come when the Shiites act to defend Lebanon’s sovereignty and independence (Tasnim, July 13, 2026).

Iran’s Involvement in the Palestinian Arena

► It was reported that during meetings held on the sidelines of the funeral ceremony for former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, a Hamas delegation met in Tehran with senior Iranian officials – Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, and IRGC Commander Ahmad Vahidi – and presented the organization’s main challenges in the Gaza Strip as well as updates on the negotiations. Senior Hamas officials, led by Shura Council Chairman Mohammad Darwish, emphasized that they oppose any external mandate over the Gaza Strip and any plan aimed at disarming Hamas. According to the report, the Hamas delegation presented Tehran with a list of requests, including Iranian backing for Hamas’s negotiating positions, outright rejection of any principle of disarmament or the administrative and political removal of Hamas from the Gaza Strip in the “day after,” and linking the negotiations between Iran and the United States to the issue of the Gaza Strip, including giving priority to “halting Israel’s war of attrition in the Strip.” Hamas also requested the continuation of Iranian financial support and the restoration of logistical supply lines to facilitate the rebuilding of the organization’s military capabilities. In addition, senior Hamas officials asked the IRGC Commander to keep the regional “support fronts” on high alert as a deterrent if Israel violates the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. According to the report, all three senior Iranian officials agreed to the requests and stressed that Iran’s compass “will not deviate from supporting Palestine until full victory and prayers in al-Quds are achieved” (Kan 11, July 14, 2026).

Iran-Houthi Relations

► Iran's mission to the UN rejected claims regarding the transfer of weapons from Iran to the Houthis in Yemen. In a statement published by the Iranian mission, it was written that the Ansar Allah movement (the Houthis) represents a significant part of the people in Yemen and that Iran views the authorities in Sana'a as the legitimate representatives of the state. It was further stated that Iran's relations with the authorities in Yemen are conducted within the framework of UN Security Council resolutions to support a process that will lead to the establishment of a unified state while preserving its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national unity. Referring to US claims that Iran exploited the Yemeni delegation's trip to the funeral ceremonies of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to transfer military equipment to Yemen, the statement emphasized that these are completely baseless claims designed to mislead the Security Council and divert attention from the "crimes" committed by the United States against the Iranian people (ISNA, July 14, 2026).

The Pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq

Iraqi Prime Minister's visit to the US and the issue of disarmament

- Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi met at the White House with US President Donald Trump and discussed with him relations between the countries and regional issues. Al-Zaidi stressed that he is determined to implement the decision to guarantee the state's monopoly on weapons throughout Iraq and that there is no possibility of his backing down. According to him, after the completion of the withdrawal of US forces, which is scheduled to take place by September 30, 2026, there will be no need for any armed factions other than the official security forces (Al-Arabiya, July 14, 2026).
- US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth said during his meeting with Al-Zaidi that Iraq must assert its sovereignty and disarm the militias in order to advance security and commercial ties between the two countries. A "senior US official" stressed that the administration is demanding that the authorities in Baghdad reduce Iranian influence in the country, put an end to attacks by Iranian-backed militias, and advance the disarmament of the militias (Shafaq News, July 15, 2026).
- In a statement issued by the militias belonging to the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, they expressed their firm opposition to the Iraqi delegation's visit to the United States, which they claimed was taking place against the backdrop of the "continued horrific crimes" committed by the "Zionist-American war machine" against "believers and innocent people in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Yemen, and Palestine." The militias reiterated that they continue to regard the presence of US forces in Iraq as an "occupation" and called on the government to end it in accordance with the agreed timetable. They added that any normalization with the "Zionist entity" constitutes "high treason," whether

within the framework of the “Abraham Accords” or under any other name. The statement also asserted that no one representing Iraq in the international arena is permitted to accept any form of “humiliation” and that any agreement reached must be submitted to parliament for approval, even if attempts are made to disguise it as a “memorandum of understanding” or a “framework for cooperation” in order to circumvent constitutional procedures. In addition, the militias warned the Iraqi government that their support for its current policies is not guaranteed as long as it pursues “projects” with entities associated with the “occupation” and the “Zionist enemy” (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 12, 2026).

► In a previous statement published by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq to mark the funeral of Iran’s former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, it was stated that it is “committed to the path of resistance.” It was further emphasized that the issue of weapons in the possession of the militias is not a matter for compromise but a principle through which “the chains of hegemony and the arrogance of the oppressors will be broken.” The organization promised that it would continue to work to develop its military and security capabilities, both quantitatively and qualitatively, against the “Zionist-American enemy” (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 12, 2026). It should be noted that within the umbrella framework of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, there are also militias that have declared their disbandment and the surrender of their weapons to the Iraqi government, including Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq and the Imam Ali Battalions, and therefore, it is unclear which militias signed the statement.

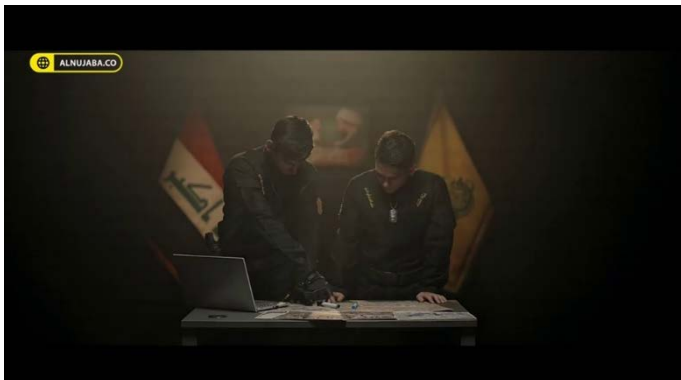
The militias and the escalation between the United States and Iran

► Amid the renewed escalation in the conflict between the United States and Iran, pro-Iranian militias in Iraq renewed their threats to target American interests in Iraq and the region if the military campaign resumes in full:

◆ Abu Mujahed al-Assaf, the military spokesperson for Kata’ib Hezbollah, warned that if a war breaks out against the Islamic Republic, the participation of the “resistance forces” will be “immediate and decisive.” He added that this is a matter of faith and that there is no room for compromise on this (Abu Mujahed al-Assaf’s Telegram channel, July 14, 2026).

◆ Harakat al-Nujaba (Movement of the Noble Ones) released a threatening that members of Generation Z are ready to leave their computer screens behind, enlist, and launch thousands of FPV attack drones against US bases. The video shows two young men wearing the jerseys of football stars Lamine Yamal and Kylian Mbappé while playing a video game on a television screen. However, as soon as they receive a call on their phones, they change into militia

uniforms and begin preparing FPV attack drones for launch. The video concludes with the message: “Thousands of determined young men and drones are ready to carry out operations against the bases of the American occupation” (Harakat al-Nujaba website, July 14, 2026).



Screenshots from the video (Nujaba Movement website, July 14, 2026)

Militias in Syria

► The Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – Possessors of Might (Uli al-Ba’s, or UAB) criticized “al-Julani’s gangs” (the Syrian regime) in a statement it published marking one year since the “massacres” they carried out in the Jabal al-Druze area. The militia emphasized its “full and absolute hostility” to the regime and its readiness to confront “this dark tyranny.” It called on the residents of Jabal al-Druze to withdraw their support and reliance on the “Zionist enemy” or on “external occupation forces,” as this constitutes a sin that erases the “legacy of our free ancestors” (Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria, July 13, 2026).