



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

July 29—August 5, 2026

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Key Trends

- ▶ Iran emphasizes the importance of the “unity of the arenas” within the Axis of Resistance amid the regional escalation with the United States.
- ▶ Iran opposes the agreement to disarm Hamas in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ Growing tensions between the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and the United States and Saudi Arabia threaten the plan to disarm the militias.

Highlights¹

- ▶ Articles in the Iranian media emphasized the growing importance of the Islamic Republic’s regional proxies within the framework of the “unity of the arenas” concept amid the continuing escalation with the United States and its allies.
- ▶ The IRGC Qods Force formulated a phased plan to activate Iran’s regional proxies in order to escalate attacks against the United States should it intensify its strikes against Iran. It was also reported that the Houthis and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq had established a joint operations headquarters near Baghdad.
- ▶ Iran publicly opposed the disarmament of Hamas following the announcement by the Peace Council of the agreement reached in the Gaza Strip. It was also reported that Tehran had attempted to persuade Hamas to reject the agreement.
- ▶ Amid tensions between Iran and Iraq since the establishment of the new government in Baghdad, the Iranian Foreign Minister visited Iraq during the Arbaeen pilgrimage and declared that relations between the two countries are at their best.
- ▶ The pro-Iranian militias in Iraq demanded that the Iraqi government respond to the joint US-Saudi strikes on Iraqi territory and made clear that they intend to expand their weapons stockpiles in light of the tensions. The Iraqi government increased security along the borders to prevent militia attacks against neighboring countries.
- ▶ The Houthi leader claimed that Israel is “planning to destroy” part of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

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

► The Houthis claimed responsibility for damaging a Saudi oil tanker as part of their “naval blockade.”

Iran and Its Proxy Policy amid the Escalation with the United States

► Amid the regional escalation in recent weeks, the Iranian media once again emphasized the importance of the activities of Iran’s regional proxies within the framework of the “unity of the arenas” concept. A commentary published by the SNN News Agency argued that the attack on Iran during the 12-Day War in June 2025, following the weakening of Hezbollah in Lebanon and the collapse of the Syrian regime, demonstrated that Iran’s first line of defense lies in southern Lebanon and Syria. According to the article, if Iran’s regional network collapses and is destroyed, Iran itself will face existential threats. Conversely, the recent war proved that only if the components of the “Resistance Network” achieve strategic unity – namely, the “unity of the arenas” – will it be possible to confront existential threats. The article stated that it cannot be denied that Iran and the regional “resistance” forces maintain mutual security dependence. In other words, any decline in the capabilities of one side and an increase in the threats it faces will inevitably produce similar consequences for the other. This, the article argued, explains why Hezbollah’s weakening in Lebanon emboldened Israel and why the fall of the Assad regime led to the attack on Iran. Based on this reasoning, the article concluded that Iran’s first line of defense against its principal regional enemy, Israel, is Hezbollah in Lebanon, while Hezbollah’s most important regional ally is the Islamic Republic. Therefore, in order to strengthen the Axis of Resistance and Iran’s security, unity and cooperation among the components of the Axis must be strengthened further. The article added that this strategic alliance, which is also rooted in shared faith and ideology, demonstrates that Iran’s ties with its allies in Yemen, Iraq, and especially Lebanon will continue and even grow stronger. It concluded that the “unity of the arenas” should remain at the center of Iran’s regional doctrine, so that all components of the “resistance” will stand together against the threats they face and adhere to the path of “resistance” (SNN, July 30, 2026).

► Another commentary published by the Mehr News Agency argued that the Axis of Resistance is now more prepared than ever for a new round of confrontation in order to defend its very existence against aggression. According to the article, the Axis is no longer merely a tactical alliance but an identity-based project nourished by the experience of the “resistance,” the blood of its shaheeds, and a shared collective memory that no external pressure can erase. Ansar Allah (the Houthis) in Yemen, which withstood years of blockade and intensive bombardment, is now operating in a new

language – that of active deterrence and bargaining, as demonstrated by its recent attack on Saudi Arabia in response to the strike on Sana’a Airport. At the same time, the Bab al-Mandeb Strait continues to serve as a source of leverage for the movement and a means of sending a clear message to the global economy. In Lebanon, Hezbollah continues to regard “resistance” as the legitimate and unavoidable means of defending Lebanon despite unprecedented pressure from multiple fronts, and it refuses to surrender the “weapons of the resistance,” which, according to the article, derive their legitimacy from the blood of the shaheeds. In Iraq as well, despite pressure from the Trump administration on the new Prime Minister, Ali al-Zaidi, the “resistance” organizations remain the backbone of the regional Axis of Resistance. According to Mehr, what distinguishes the Axis of Resistance from other regional coalitions is not only its military power and geographical depth but also its “soft power,” which stems from a vibrant and dynamic culture that views *shahada* (martyrdom) as a beginning rather than an end, and resistance to oppression as a religious and humanitarian duty rather than merely a political choice. The article concluded that this is a narrative that the United States cannot buy and Israel cannot bomb (Mehr, July 30, 2026).

► Meanwhile, “two senior Iranian officials” stated that the IRGC Qods Force had formulated, during the ceasefire with the United States, a phased escalation plan aimed at disrupting maritime shipping, driving up oil prices, and exerting heavy economic pressure on Washington through Iran’s regional proxies. According to the report, the plan called for activating the proxies to intensify their attacks if the United States increased its own strikes, thereby making the war as costly as possible for President Trump. The Iranian officials said that senior Qods Force commanders had held online conferences with commanders from Hezbollah, the Houthis, and the Shiite militias in Iraq to coordinate their activities against the United States and its regional allies (The New York Times, August 1, 2026).

► Against the backdrop of growing coordination among Iran’s proxies within the Axis of Resistance, “informed sources” reported that the Houthis and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq had established a new joint operations headquarters south of Baghdad to coordinate their activities. According to the report, the headquarters constitutes another step toward strengthening coordination between the two sides and institutionalizing the Houthi presence in Iraq, which has existed for several years (Asharq Al-Awsat, July 29, 2026).² In the same context, “two regional officials” reported that the Houthis had participated, in coordination with the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and under the direction

² For further details, see the Amit Institute study of August 5, 2024, “Cooperation between [the Shi’ite militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen](#)”

of the IRGC, in carrying out the July 27, 2026 attack against Saudi Arabia, which was launched from Iraqi territory (Reuters, July 30, 2026).

Iran's Involvement in the Palestinian Arena

► An “American official” stated that Iran had attempted to persuade Hamas to reject the agreement to disarm in the Gaza Strip, but the United States succeeded in overcoming these efforts (Reuters, July 31, 2026). This confirmed an earlier report according to which IRGC officials urged the Hamas delegation that attended the funeral of former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei not to rush into accepting the Peace Council’s proposal (Axios, July 31, 2026).³

► The IRGC declared that the “plot to disarm Hamas” would fail and was doomed from the outset. In a statement marking the second anniversary of the killing of Hamas Political Bureau Chief Ismail Haniyeh, the IRGC asserted that the glory of the “anti-Zionist resistance” cannot be undermined and that, with God’s help, “Palestine’s final victory over the occupiers” is closer than its enemies imagine. The statement further claimed that Haniyeh’s death had strengthened the determination of the Palestinian people and Hamas fighters to continue along his path, deepened the discourse of “resistance,” and expanded support for “Palestine” around the world. It added that the military and political support provided to Israel by the United States and other Western countries, together with the cooperation of “reactionary regional governments,” made them accomplices in “Israel’s crimes” and imposed international responsibility upon them for “genocide and war crimes.” The statement concluded by emphasizing that the path of “Martyr Haniyeh” would continue until “the full realization of Palestine’s objectives and the destruction of the occupiers of Jerusalem” (Sepah News, August 2, 2026).

► Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei addressed the announcement of the agreement to disarm Hamas in the Gaza Strip during his weekly press conference. He said that reports concerning the agreement were contradictory and that the “Palestinian resistance” had set conditions for its disarmament. He added that Israel had never honored any agreement and merely exploited such agreements to continue what he described as its policy of “genocide.” Baghaei further argued that the “crimes of the Zionist regime” demonstrate that it remains committed to its objective of the “destruction of the Palestinians,” and that they therefore have no alternative but “resistance” in order to realize their right to self-determination (Mehr, August 3, 2026).

³ For further details, see the Amit Institute study of August 3, 2026, “[Agreement for Collecting Weapons from Hamas and the Other Armed Organizations in the Gaza Strip – Significance and Reactions](#)”

Iran's Involvement in Iraq

- Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke with his Iraqi counterpart, Fuad Hussein. They discussed recent regional developments, ways to strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation and coordination, and the principal issues on the shared agenda of the two countries (IRNA, August 2, 2026).
- Subsequently, Araghchi arrived in Najaf, Iraq, to participate in the Arbaeen pilgrimage ceremonies.⁴ In an interview with the Iraqi News Agency, he said that the presence of pilgrims from Iraq and Iran illustrates the strength of the religious ties between the two countries. He added that the Islamic Republic's relations with the Iraqi government are currently at their best and that the discussions held by Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi during his recent visit to Tehran had been highly constructive. According to Araghchi, Iran and Iraq maintain close and continuous cooperation in numerous fields, including political coordination and the formulation of common positions on issues of mutual concern, as well as economic cooperation, security, border protection, regulation of trade in the border regions, and the development of joint transportation routes (Iraqi News Agency, August 3, 2026).



Iranian Foreign Minister in Iraq (Tabnak, August 3, 2026)

- Faleh al-Fayyadh, chairman of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), the umbrella organization of Iraq's militias, met with Iran's ambassador to Iraq, Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeq, to discuss ways to strengthen bilateral security relations in light of the "rapidly developing situation" in the region. Al-Fayyadh expressed his condolences over the deaths of "Iranian advisors" who had been present at PMF headquarters during the Saudi and US strikes on July 29, 2026, and claimed that the attacks constituted a violation of Iraq's sovereignty (PMF Telegram channel, July 30, 2026).

⁴ Arbaeen is the Shiite commemoration marking forty days after the death of Imam Hussein ibn Ali and many members of the family of Ali ibn Abi Talib at the Battle of Karbala in 61 AH (680 CE). On this day, Shiites traditionally undertake a pilgrimage to Imam Hussein's shrine in Karbala, Iraq.

The Pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq

- The Islamic Resistance in Iraq condemned Saudi Arabia and the United States following their strikes against the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq on July 29, 2026, despite the militias' denial of responsibility for the attacks against Saudi Arabia two days earlier. The umbrella organization questioned the Iraqi government's ability to respond to attacks on Iraqi territory if the militias were to surrender their weapons, as required. Accordingly, the Islamic Resistance announced that it was giving the Iraqi government until August 6, 2026, to respond to the strikes, warning that the organization's response was "inevitable" and could be directed against "US agents" in Saudi Arabia "whenever circumstances require" (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 29, 2026).
- Harakat al-Nujaba also presented several demands to the Iraqi government: the expulsion of the Americans from Iraq and the termination of all cooperation with them; the severing of cooperation with Saudi Arabia; the publication of an official condemnation of the strikes on Iraqi territory; and the immediate provision of advanced air defense systems to safeguard Iraq's sovereignty and airspace. The militia concluded by declaring that it would not allow the United States and Saudi Arabia to "defile Iraqi soil" without exacting a heavy price (Harakat al-Nujaba Telegram channel, July 29, 2026).
- According to "sources," the Iraqi government informed that it would impose heavy fines on any official body proven to have launched rockets or drones from areas under its control – a message directed at the pro-Iranian militias affiliated with the PMF. It was also reported that the government had tightened security measures along the border areas to prevent any suspicious militia activity that could be directed against neighboring countries (Al-Araby and News 1, August 4, 2026).
- Amid growing tensions, Ahmad Mohsen Faraj al-Hamidawi, the Secretary-General of Kata'ib Hezbollah, stressed that the "resistance factions" refused to surrender their weapons and would continue expanding their arsenal. He emphasized that the resistance must continue in order to deter "hostile elements" and exact a price for their aggression, particularly in light of the "unprecedented" US-Saudi strike, which, he warned, could lead to "a new phase" in the region (Shafaq News, August 3, 2026).

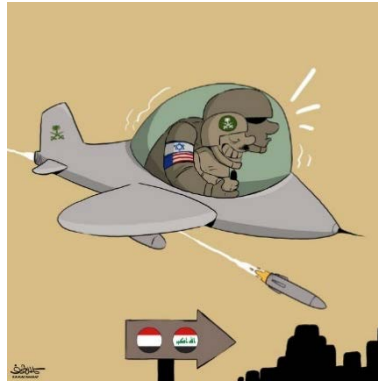
The Houthis in Yemen

- Houthi movement leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi declared in his weekly speech that the overarching objective of the Houthis' enemies is "to reshape the Middle East and establish Greater Israel," and that this objective should be understood as the context for the confrontations in Iran, Lebanon, and Palestine. He claimed that the "Israeli enemy" was "systematically violating" the ceasefire

agreement in the Gaza Strip and had killed more than one thousand people since it came into effect. He further asserted that there are “significant indications” that Israel is “planning to destroy” part of Al-Aqsa Mosque through excavations and “particularly dangerous activities” (Almasirah, July 30, 2026).

► Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for an attack on a Saudi oil tanker off the Saudi city of Yanbu on the northern Red Sea using several ballistic missiles, describing it as part of the implementation of the decision to impose a “naval blockade” on Saudi Arabia. According to Saree, since the beginning of the “blockade” on July 22, 2026, eight Saudi oil tankers had been attacked, while another 29 tankers had been forced to turn back after being prevented from proceeding (Yahya Saree’s Telegram channel, August 5, 2026). Earlier, Saree announced that Houthi forces had attacked a “sensitive Saudi target” at Najran Airport with a drone in response to what he described as Saudi violations of Yemeni airspace by drones (Yahya Saree’s Telegram channel, August 4, 2026).

► The Houthi Foreign Ministry condemned Saudi Arabia’s announcement of the establishment of a coalition to protect maritime shipping routes, calling it an “alliance to defend Saudi crimes.” The ministry stated that the international community should understand that the Houthis’ struggle against Saudi Arabia is intended to restore their legitimate rights and end the blockade imposed on them. It urged countries supporting the coalition not to allow Saudi Arabia to drag them into what it described as unjust wars that would ultimately end in defeat. The ministry also argued that any military presence in the Red Sea would only create instability and affect maritime traffic, which it claimed was currently safe. It denied any rumor regarding fees or charges levied for passage through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait or the Red Sea (Houthi Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, July 31, 2026). The Saudi Ministry of Defense stated that the “multinational defensive maritime coalition,” comprising 14 countries, is purely defensive in nature and is not directed against any state or organization (Saudi Ministry of Defense X account, July 30, 2026).



Cartoon by Yemeni cartoonist Kamal Sharaf, affiliated with the Axis of Resistance, depicting Israel and the United States pushing Saudi Arabia to attack Yemen and Iraq (Kamal Sharaf X account, July 29, 2026)

The Militias in Syria

- The Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – Possessors of Might (Uli al-Ba’s, or UAB) published a video addressed to soldiers of the IDF 210th Division, carrying the following message in Hebrew and Arabic: “Do not hasten your own end. Your daily airstrikes and your cautious incursions into the south are not a demonstration of strength but conclusive proof of your helplessness and your fear of direct confrontation. Rest assured that your illusions will be shattered on the ground – and very soon.” The accompanying video, which included footage of IDF activity, displayed the following message: “Your daily airstrikes and ground incursions are being documented every second. Every strike or bombardment you carry out on our land brings you closer to zero hour. Southern Syria is waiting for you, and the decision is yours” (Islamic Resistance Front in Syria Telegram channel, July 30, 2026).