



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

October 14—21, 2026

Editor: Dr. Raz Zimmt



Key Trends

- **Increased Iranian diplomatic activity vis-à-vis the Lebanese state.**
- **Messages of support for the Palestinians from the Iranian Foreign Minister and the Qods Force commander.**
- **Iran continues its political and military support for the Houthis in Yemen.**

Highlights¹

- The Iranian Foreign Minister emphasized Iran's support for the Palestinians in his speech at the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's foreign ministers in Baghdad. The Qods Force commander issued a message of support for the Palestinians.
- Iran reportedly instructed Hezbollah to increase its military readiness ahead of a possible resumption of the war with the United States and Israel.
- The Iranian Foreign Minister spoke by phone with the Lebanese President and met with the Lebanese Foreign Minister. Meanwhile, the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister visited Lebanon and met with the Parliament Speaker and senior figures in the Shiite community.
- Iran reportedly provided the Houthis with military and intelligence assistance in their attacks against Saudi Arabia.
- It was claimed that prominent pro-Iranian militias in Iraq had frozen payments to their fighters in order to transfer the funds to the IRGC in Iran.
- The brother of a pro-Iranian militia leader who is under US sanctions was appointed Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq.

Iranian Involvement in the Palestinian Arena

- Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in his speech at the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's foreign ministers in Baghdad that the Palestinian issue remains the central issue of the Islamic world and that peace cannot be discussed while ignoring it. He noted that "Palestine" remains an open wound on the conscience of the international community and that Gaza has become a symbol of the failure of international mechanisms to prevent genocide. According to

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

him, dozens of resolutions have failed to end the occupation and violence, and “the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people, the killing of innocent people by Israel, and the threats to Jerusalem and its holy sites” should concern everyone. He emphasized that Iran stands alongside the Palestinian people and calls on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and all its member states to do everything necessary to end the killing and the blockade and make support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people a shared priority backed by practical, coordinated action. He also expressed support for the Turkish Foreign Minister’s proposal to designate a “Day of Remembrance for the Genocide in Gaza” (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, October 17, 2026).



The Iranian Foreign Minister at the meeting of foreign ministers in Baghdad (ISNA, October 17, 2026)

► Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani sent a message of support to the Al-Quds International Foundation,² stating that support for the Palestinian people and their “resistance” is a duty Iran undertook following the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and has upheld to this day. Qaani noted that the issue of al-Aqsa Mosque and the need to confront threats from enemies have always been at the forefront of Iran’s considerations and priorities. He thanked the Al-Quds Foundation for its support for Iran against the United States and Israel and for the condolences it sent following the death of Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei (Tasnim, October 14, 2026).

Iranian Involvement in Lebanon

► “Security and military sources in Lebanon” reported that Iran had instructed Hezbollah to increase its military readiness ahead of an imminent regional confrontation. According to the report, the organization is simultaneously preparing to activate a decentralized combat system designed to enable its units to continue operating even if Israel strikes its central leadership. According to the “sources,” the instructions were issued as part of ongoing coordination between the IRGC and the leaders of its regional allies. The coordination includes preparations for the possibility of an

² The Al-Quds International Foundation is an anti-Israel Islamic organization that holds conferences throughout the Arab and Muslim world to highlight the alleged threat to Jerusalem under Israeli rule.

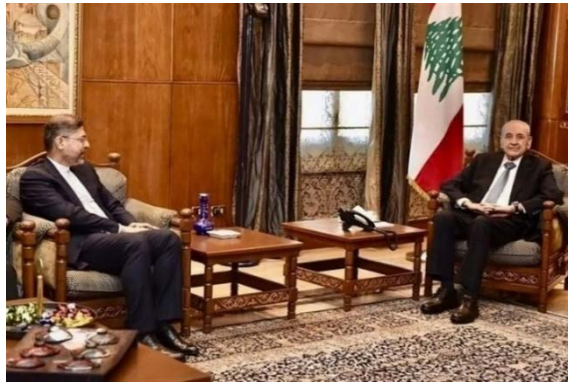
expansion of the confrontation with Israel and the United States, as well as the formulation of a military response in the event of another war (Erem News, October 15, 2026).

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke by phone with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and discussed developments in Lebanon and the region. According to a statement by the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Araghchi emphasized the particular importance Iran attaches to ending the attacks and “aggression of the Zionist regime” against Lebanon and ending the occupation of areas in the south of the country. He briefed the Lebanese President on Iran’s diplomatic activities and efforts in recent weeks and days. The Lebanese President stressed the need to use diplomatic solutions to resolve the crises in the region. The two also discussed bilateral relations between the Iranian and Lebanese governments and continued contacts and talks between senior officials of the two countries (ILNA, October 14, 2026). Subsequently, Araghchi met with his Lebanese counterpart, Youssef Raggi, on the sidelines of the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and discussed relations between the two countries and regional developments (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, October 17, 2026).

► Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh arrived for an official visit to Lebanon. Upon his arrival, he was received by Khalil Hamdan, a member of the Amal Movement’s political bureau, and Ali al-Miqdad, a Lebanese MP representing Hezbollah (Tasnim, October 14, 2026). In a meeting with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, the parties discussed recent developments in the region and Lebanon, ways to expand strategic cooperation between the countries, and diplomatic efforts to stop Israeli attacks in Lebanon. After the meeting, Khatibzadeh said relations between Tehran and Beirut are historic, very close, and multidimensional, encompassing various spheres. He added that continued exchanges of views and consultations are the minimum necessary to strengthen ongoing coordination and increase cooperation between the two countries (Tasnim, October 15, 2026).

► The Deputy Foreign Minister’s visit to Lebanon reportedly focused on meetings with Shiite leaders, including a meeting at the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council, as well as with several media and cultural figures and directors of research institutes. The meetings were intended to provide an opportunity to hear views on Iran’s role and what Tehran could offer Lebanon and the region, with particular emphasis on the situation of the Shiite community. Khatibzadeh reaffirmed the central role of Parliament Speaker Berri in managing the affairs of the “Shiite duo” (Hezbollah and Amal) within state institutions and clarified that Iran supports decisions reached by consensus between its two components. In this context, an expanded parliamentary meeting was held with the participation of

MPs from both factions of the “Shiite duo.” The meeting addressed domestic issues, decisions that needed to be made, ways of dealing with the government, parliamentary activity, and relations with the Lebanese President. The Deputy Foreign Minister emphasized that the regional arenas are interconnected, clarifying the principle that no party should be allowed to be drawn into war alone. He noted that the outcome of the confrontation between Iran and the United States would affect all of Tehran’s allies in the region and that Iran would not shirk its responsibility toward the Shiite community in Lebanon or leave it without protection or support. He also stressed that Lebanon remains a key element of any possible agreement between Iran and the United States and that Tehran would not stand idly by if Israel launched a new war against Lebanon (Almodon, October 19, 2026).



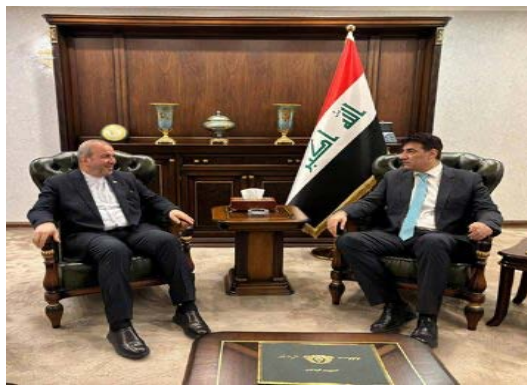
Meeting between the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister and the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament (ILNA, October 15, 2026)

► The international secretariat of the “Trustees of the Messengers” (Omana al-Rusul) conference and Iran’s Islamic Azad University launched an initiative to develop systematic academic literature on the “School of the Shaheed Hassan Nasrallah.” The initiative encompasses 12 core areas and 72 research topics, including the former Hezbollah Secretary-General’s religious and strategic views, his connection to the Islamic Revolution and the rule of the Islamic jurist, his leadership, the concept of deterrence, the unity of the Axis of Resistance, the resistance economy, cognitive warfare, and training the next generation. Under the program, conferences, panels, and discussions will be held at universities across Iran, and their findings will be published in collections of articles and special research issues to be presented at a concluding international conference (Mehr, October 19, 2026).

Iranian Involvement in Iraq

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met separately with Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Faleh al-Zaidi and Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein on the sidelines of the meeting of foreign ministers in Baghdad. They discussed regional developments and relations between the two countries (ISNA, October 17, 2026).

► Iranian Ambassador to Iraq Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeq met with Iraqi Deputy Foreign Minister Shorsh Khalid Saeed. The two discussed bilateral relations and regional developments and exchanged views on ways to strengthen cooperation in various fields to advance their shared interests. The Iraqi Deputy Foreign Minister also briefed the Iranian Ambassador on preparations for hosting the 52nd session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Baghdad. According to a statement by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, both sides emphasized the need to prioritize dialogue and diplomacy and to rely on peaceful solutions, as well as the importance of reducing tensions, preventing crises from escalating, and strengthening regional security and stability (ISNA, October 15, 2026).



Meeting between the Iranian Ambassador in Baghdad and the Iraqi Deputy Foreign Minister (ISNA, October 15, 2026)

► A ceremony honoring Iraqi officials responsible for hospitality and assistance stations serving Shiite pilgrims during the mourning ceremonies commemorating Imam Hussein was held at the Imam Reza Shrine complex in Mashhad, under the leadership of Iranian Deputy Interior Minister Ali-Akbar Pour-Jamshidian. Hundreds of managers of assistance stations from Iraq attended the ceremony, along with representatives of the shrine's administration, the central headquarters of the Arbaeen ceremonies (the pilgrimage to Shiite holy sites in Iraq), and the IRGC's Qods Force. The Iranian Deputy Interior Minister said the activities of those operating the assistance stations in Iraq demonstrate the unity between the Iranian and Iraqi peoples, as was also evident during the war with the United States and Israel (Mehr, October 19, 2026).

The Houthis in Yemen

► Over the past week, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for at least seven "operations" against various targets in Saudi Arabia using ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones. The targets included airports (among them King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh), energy infrastructure, and other military targets. Saree also claimed responsibility for an attack on government buildings in Aden, the capital of the Saudi-backed Yemeni government, claiming that

the buildings served as a Saudi operations base. He also claimed that a Saudi Apache attack helicopter had been shot down near Najran (Yahya Saree's Telegram channel, October 14–21, 2026). Turki al-Maliki, spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, reported that at least four ballistic missiles, 20 drones, and three cruise missiles launched toward various targets in Saudi Arabia had been intercepted. Coalition forces also attacked Houthi weapons storage facilities, launch sites, and other infrastructure in Sanaa and other areas, as well as vessels attempting to smuggle weapons into Houthi-controlled territory. According to him, the Apache helicopter crashed due to a technical malfunction (Saudi-led coalition forces X account, October 14–21, 2026).

► It was reported that Iran was assisting the Houthis in Yemen in directing their attacks against Saudi Arabia and improving their operational capabilities through intelligence, training, and tactical guidance. According to the report, based on information provided by “officials briefed on intelligence from Saudi Arabia and the anti-Houthi Yemeni coalition,” Iranian assistance enabled the Houthis to carry out their most powerful and sophisticated attacks to date against Saudi Arabia and its allies in Yemen. The report also stated that IRGC officers stationed in Yemen had helped the Houthis deploy missiles and radars that threaten shipping in the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait (The Wall Street Journal, October 16, 2026).

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi emphasized the need to strengthen relations between Iran and Yemen in a message sent to Houthi Deputy Foreign Minister Abdulwahid Abu Ras. He noted that relations between the two countries should be strengthened and developed and that the blockade imposed on Yemen has caused severe suffering to the country's residents. Araghchi also addressed recent regional developments and ways to confront shared challenges (Tasnim, October 15, 2026).

► Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei stated that Iran is prepared to help resolve the crisis between Saudi Arabia and Yemen through peaceful means. Speaking to journalists, Baghaei outlined Iran's positions on the confrontation between the two countries and clarified that Tehran has always been willing to offer its good offices to help end the hostilities and remains prepared to use all its capabilities for this purpose if both sides request it. He added that developments over the past 12 years have demonstrated that foreign intervention, a military approach, and a blockade are not solutions to the problem in Yemen. Responding to a claim by a senior Saudi Foreign Ministry official regarding Iran's role in encouraging the Houthis in Yemen to attack Saudi Arabia, the spokesman said Iran rejects any allegation of involvement in Houthi operations and stressed that resolving the Yemeni issue requires respecting the country's national

sovereignty and territorial integrity, ending all interference in its internal affairs, and, above all, lifting the air and sea blockade. He noted that Yemeni forces operate according to their own interests and assessments. Nevertheless, Iran does not believe that escalating tensions serves the interests of any party (Mehr, October 16, 2026).

Pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq

► “Iraqi security sources” reported that several pro-Iranian militias in Iraq had begun to freeze fighters’ bonus payments of up to \$400 per month in order to transfer the funds to the Iranian IRGC, following instructions from the Qods Force. “Sources familiar with the details” noted that the prominent militias required to take this unusual step were Kata’ib Hezbollah, Harakat al-Nujaba, and Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada. However, the measure does not affect operatives serving in the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) who receive salaries from the Iraqi budget. The report followed a disclosure by Admiral Brad Cooper, commander of US Central Command, on October 16, 2026, that Iran-linked groups had begun suspending payments to fighters to transfer funds to the IRGC, which is facing financial difficulties due to the war and the US blockade (Erem News, October 19, 2026).

► The Iraqi Parliament approved the appointment of Laith al-Khazali as the new Deputy Prime Minister, completing the formation of Ali al-Zaidi’s government. Al-Khazali is the brother of Qais al-Khazali, Secretary-General of the pro-Iranian Shiite militia Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq. In December 2019, the US administration imposed sanctions on the brothers for human rights violations after militia operatives attacked protesters. A month later, they were designated as terrorists because of thousands of attacks against US and coalition forces in Iraq (Al-Saa’a, October 14, 2026; Al-Hadath, October 17, 2026).



Laith al-Khazali (Shafaq News, October 15, 2026)

► The Iraqi government ordered the prosecution of anyone who attempts to disrupt the process of placing weapons under exclusive state control or incites opposition to it. A statement from the Prime Minister’s Office said that despite the importance of freedom of opinion and expression, all

institutions are required to file criminal complaints against anyone involved in incitement or attempts to obstruct the implementation of decisions restricting the possession of weapons outside the framework of the state, to preserve public order and enable the state to fulfill its legal and moral obligations (Shafaq News, October 19, 2026).

Militias in Syria

► A statement by the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – Possessors of Might (Uli al-Ba’s, UAB) said that the “blatant and ongoing Zionist incursions and violations” in southern Syria demonstrate a “vacuum in deterrence and in the practical action required to defend the homeland’s borders and safeguard its violated sovereignty.” Accordingly, the militia expressed support for popular actions by the Syrian people and called for a series of demonstrations following Friday prayers on October 23, 2026. At the end of the statement, the militia warned the “enemy” that the “illusion of security will not last” and that the price would be “heavier than its leaders imagine” (Islamic Resistance Front Telegram channel, October 20, 2026).