



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

March 26—April 2, 2025

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Highlights¹

- ▶ “World Jerusalem Day” rallies were held throughout Iran and in the countries of the “Shiite axis” on the last Friday of the month of Ramadan. The event was exploited by senior figures in Iran and the “resistance front” to emphasize support for the Palestinians and resistance to Israel. Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei declared that it is a religious and moral obligation to remove Israel from the region.
- ▶ The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson condemned Israel’s attack in Beirut and called on the international community to act to stop the Israeli attacks in Lebanon.
- ▶ Iran’s ambassador to Iraq made it clear that US President Trump’s demand to dismantle the pro-Iranian Iraqi militias or merge them into the Iraqi armed forces is unacceptable to Tehran. However, it was reported that the Shiite forces in Iraq agreed to discuss merging the militias under the “Popular Mobilization” framework. The Houthis reportedly established a new force called the Hassan Nasrallah Battalion to operate in Iraq.
- ▶ The Houthis claimed responsibility for two missile attacks against Israel. The IDF Spokesperson said that all the missiles were intercepted before they penetrated Israeli territory.
- ▶ The United States continued its attacks against Houthi military targets and reinforced its air forces in the region. The Houthis claimed responsibility for attacks against the aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman in the Red Sea, claiming that American “aggression” does not affect them.

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

Iran and the militias in light of developments in the Palestinian arena

Iran

► On March 28, 2025, “World Jerusalem Day” rallies were held throughout Iran. The rallies are held every year on the last Friday of Ramadan to mark the support of Iran and the “axis of resistance” for the Palestinian cause and the campaign to “liberate Jerusalem.” The rallies were attended by senior Iranian government figures, including President Masoud Pezeshkian, Majles Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, and Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani (Iranian news agencies, March 28, 2025).



“World Jerusalem Day” rallies in Iran (ISNA, March 28, 2025)

► Iranian leaders issued statements on the occasion of “World Jerusalem Day,” praising the Palestinian “resistance,” condemning Israel and the United States, and pledging to continue supporting the Palestinians and working to destroy Israel:

- ◆ Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said in a televised message before the events that the “Jerusalem Day” rallies had always been a source of pride for the Iranian people and an expression of their unity, strength, and commitment to their political goals and support for “Palestine.” He stressed that the rallies are even more important this year than in the past and expressed hope that they would be among the best, most glorious and honorable in recent years (Iranian Supreme Leader’s website, March 27, 2025). In a speech on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, Khamenei said that the “Zionist regime” must be uprooted from “Palestine,” and that, with God’s help, it will be uprooted. He noted that it is a religious, moral, and human duty to act to remove the “evil and criminal entity” from the region. Khamenei condemned the support of the United States and Western governments for Israel, which he said is perpetrating “genocide” in the Gaza Strip, and

noted that there is only one “proxy” in the region, and that is the “Zionist regime” acting on behalf of the colonialists in the West (Iranian Supreme Leader’s website, March 31, 2025).

◆ In his speech in Tehran, Majles Speaker Ghalibaf said that the “Al-Aqsa Flood” was a legitimate response in the struggle against 77 years of oppression and crimes by the “Zionist regime,” the United States, and Britain. He noted that the United States and Britain created the “Zionist regime” and invested in it and that Israel is a tool in the hands of the United States, it does not have the ability to defend its interests on its own, and it can solve its internal problems only through the political support of the United States (Mehr, March 28, 2025).

◆ The commander of the IRGC’s Qods Force, Esmail Qaani, said in a recorded speech on the occasion of “World Jerusalem Day” that the “crimes of the Zionist regime” and the support of the United States have not succeeded in limiting the “resistance” and that the “resistance in Palestine” is even stronger today than it was in the “Al-Aqsa Flood” attack in October 2023, and its scope has expanded throughout the world. He noted that the “unity of the arenas” during the war demonstrated the strength of the “resistance front” throughout the world. He emphasized that Iran had stood by the Palestinian people in defending Jerusalem before and after the “Al-Aqsa Flood,” both by supporting the fighters on the front lines and by taking direct military actions against Israel, such as the two Iranian attacks on Israel (in April and October 2024), and that it would continue to stand firm with the Palestinians and the “resistance” organizations in the region until the final victory was achieved and Jerusalem was liberated (Tasnim, March 26, 2025).



Qods Force commander in a recorded speech on the occasion of “World Jerusalem Day” (Tasnim, March 26, 2025)

◆ The General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces issued a statement calling on all the peoples of the world, especially Muslims, to come out during the day to express support

for the “resistance of the Palestinian people,” to condemn “the crimes against humanity, the genocide, the murder of children, and the insane aggression of the illegal regime [Israel] and its supporters, especially the criminal US,” and to convey the message that the oppressed Palestinian people are not alone and that the “resistance” will continue until the liberation of Jerusalem and the elimination of the “Zionist regime” (Tasnim, March 26, 2025).

◆ The IRGC said in a statement that the issue of “Palestine” has now become a global issue and not just an Islamic and Arab one, and that in the wake of the “Al-Aqsa Flood” and the “cruel and racist crimes of the Zionist regime” against the residents of the Gaza Strip, the ideal of the liberation of Jerusalem and the liberation of the Palestinian people has expanded beyond the borders of the Muslim world. It also said that “World Jerusalem Day” has abolished the evil vision of the United States and the “Zionist regime” to rule over the Muslim countries in the region (Tasnim, March 27, 2025).

◆ Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrote in an op-ed on the occasion of “World Jerusalem Day” that protest rallies or expressions of support for the Palestinians are not enough, and that it is time for the world’s governments to take legal, economic, and international measures against the “crimes of the occupying regime” (Israel). Araghchi stressed three principles that the international community must adhere to vis-à-vis Israel: no to occupation, no to apartheid, and no to the forced displacement of Palestinians and the erasure of “Palestine.” He noted that the Arab states must recognize that the “resistance” is an obstacle and a deterrent to the incessant demands of the West and Israel, not only in the context of Lebanon and “Palestine” but also in relation to the entire Arab world, and that if the “resistance” is weakened, the Arab world is also in danger of aggression by the “Zionist regime.” Araghchi added that the Arab world and the international community must also stop direct and indirect cooperation with Israel and prosecute its leaders. He stressed that the liberation of “Palestine” is not a distant dream and that no apartheid regime, military occupation, or colonial project can continue forever (Al-Akhbar, March 27, 2025).

► Iranian Foreign Minister Araghchi spoke with his Egyptian counterpart, Badr Abdelatty, to discuss developments in the region, especially in the Gaza Strip. He stressed the need for continued coordination between the countries of the region to stop the “genocide in the Gaza Strip” and to prevent the continuation of Israeli attacks against Lebanon and Syria and the

American attacks in Yemen (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, March 30, 2025). The issue of the Gaza Strip was also discussed in a telephone conversation between President Masoud Pezeshkian and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, held on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr (ISNA, March 31, 2025).

The Houthis

► This past week, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saria claimed responsibility for two missile attacks against Israel “in support of the oppressed Palestinian people and in response to the massacres perpetrated by the criminal Zionist regime against our people in the Gaza Strip” (Yahya Saria’s X account, March 26 – April 2, 2025). The IDF Spokesperson stated that all the missiles launched from Yemen toward Israel were intercepted before they crossed into Israeli territory (IDF Spokesperson, March 26 – April 2, 2025).

► Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi stressed that the Yemeni people continue to support the Palestinians and set an example for the rest of the Islamic nation, and that no “aggression” and pressure will succeed in dissuading them from continuing it. According to him, there is “complete success” in preventing the “Israeli enemy” from navigating the Red Sea. He stressed that their attacks in “occupied Palestine” would continue and that the “American enemy” cannot prevent them (Al-Masirah Telegram channel, March 28, 2025).

► In a speech on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, the head of the Houthi movement’s Supreme Political Council, Mahdi al-Mashat, called on world leaders to “take significant positions in support of the Palestinian people.” He stressed that Yemen, despite the consequences, fully supports “Palestine” and will continue until the end of the “aggression” in the region. He said rallies of one million people “are the least we can do” at a time when “all the leaders of the Arab countries who surrender to the Zionist enemy have disappeared.” Al-Mashat added that American “aggression” will not deter them but leads the Houthis to develop their military capabilities (Telegram channel of the Yemeni Presidential Office, March 29, 2025).

The militias in Iraq

► Qais al-Khazali, secretary-general of the Asa’ib Ahl al-Haqq militia, said in a speech on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr that the Gaza Strip is under a “massacre” without any real action by the international community. He claimed that “one of the Arab countries plays a role in the implementation of the Israeli plan to divide Syria,” without mentioning the name of the country (Shafaq News, March 31, 2025).

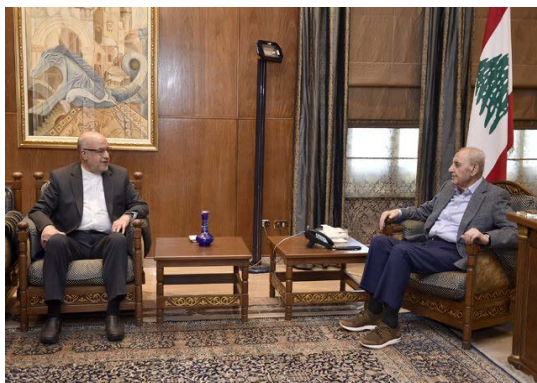
► In his speech on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, the secretary-general of Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Abu Alaa al-Wala'i, declared that the "Zionist-American" plan to erase the Palestinian cause had failed and would fail. He said the "camps" are clearer today, citing as an example Qatar, which, he said, "pretends to be a dove of peace, but supported the terrorist Al-Nusra Front in Syria"² (Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Telegram channel, March 31, 2025).

Iran's involvement in Lebanon

► Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei condemned the Israeli attack on Beirut on March 28, 2025. He noted that the attack is a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and that the UN and the countries guaranteeing the ceasefire agreement in Lebanon bear direct responsibility for stopping Israel's repeated "violations" of the ceasefire. Baghaei added that the excuses provided by Israel to justify its "aggression" against Lebanon are baseless and that the international community should take firm measures against Israel's violation of the law in the region and against the threats it poses to peace and security in the world (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, March 28, 2025). In another statement, Baghaei reiterated his condemnation of Israel's attacks in Lebanon. He accused the United States and the West of complicity in the "crimes of the Zionist regime" and called on the countries of the region to confront "the incitement of the occupation regime" (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, April 1, 2025).

► Iran's ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, met in Beirut with the speaker of the Lebanese parliament, Nabih Berri, to discuss the political and military developments in Lebanon and the relations between the countries (ISNA, March 29, 2025).

² The Al-Nusra Front was the branch established by Al-Qaeda in Iraq (later ISIS) at the beginning of the civil war in Syria in 2011, under the leadership of Abu Mohammad al-Julani (the nom de guerre of Ahmad al-Shara, the current president of Syria). Al-Shara later renounced Al-Qaeda and founded Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (which was disbanded after the fall of the Assad regime), but his opponents in the "axis of resistance" still use the names of the Al-Nusra Front and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham to condemn him and link him to Al-Qaeda and ISIS terrorism.



The Iranian ambassador meets with the speaker of the Lebanese parliament in Beirut (ISNA, March 29, 2025)

Iran in the face of events in Syria

► The Iranian foreign minister’s special representative for Syria, Mohammad Reza Rauf Sheibani, met in Doha with the Qatari Foreign Ministry’s minister of state, Mohammad al-Khulaifi, to discuss the situation in Syria. Sheibani emphasized Iran’s support for preserving Syria’s territorial integrity and stability and the need for the participation of all groups and sects in Syrian society in determining the system of government while respecting the rights of religious and ethnic groups. The two condemned the continued occupation of large parts of Syria and the ongoing Israeli attacks in the country and stressed the need for a decisive response by the international community to the “crimes of the Zionist regime” in the region (IRNA, March 26, 2025).



Meeting of the Iranian foreign minister’s representative for Syria with the Qatari minister of state (IRNA, March 26, 2025)

Iran’s involvement in Iraq

► Iran’s ambassador to Iraq, Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeqh, said that President Trump’s letter to Iran’s Supreme Leader Khamenei included a demand for the dismantling of the pro-Iranian militias or their merger into the Iraqi armed forces. He made it clear that the decision in this regard rests with Iraq and that the request to dismantle the militias is unacceptable to

Iran. The ambassador stressed that Iran has taught the militias “how to fish” and now they do it themselves without the need for Iranian support, as do the other “resistance” forces in the region (Al-Sharqiya, March 27, 2025).



The Iranian ambassador to Iraq (Al-Sharqiya, March 27, 2025)

► In this context, “knowledgeable sources” reported that the Shiite forces in Iraq agreed to discuss the process of integrating all the armed militias “belonging to the axis of resistance in Iraq” within the framework of the “Popular Mobilization” (Al-Hashd al-Shaabi) umbrella organization. The first meeting on the subject is reportedly expected to take place after the end of Eid al-Fitr and will deal with the details of the merger stages and finding solutions to the obstacles they face. According to the “sources”, the process of merging the factions is expected to take effect soon. They noted that this is an important step to improve stability and security in Iraq, especially in tense areas, and to reduce the gaps and divisions between the groups (Shafaq News, March 30, 2025).

► Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian spoke with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia’ al-Sudani on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr. Pezeshkian noted that Iran is determined to implement all the agreements signed between the two countries and to strengthen the ties between them. The two stressed that positions between Muslim countries must be coordinated to deal with the challenges, threats, and dangers. The Iraqi prime minister noted that his country opposes the threats facing Iran (Tabnak, April 1, 2025).

Cooperation between the Houthis and the militias in Iraq

► The Houthis reportedly established a new force called the Hassan Nasrallah Battalion to operate in Iraq. The force is said to consist of 700 to 1,200 armed men, including Iraqis and Syrians who fled Syria after the fall of the Assad regime. According to Muammar al-Eryani, the minister of information in the Western-backed Yemeni government, the Houthis’ activity in Iraq

is a new step that further complicates the security situation in the region and poses a serious threat to regional and international security and peace (Al-Ain al-Ekhbariya, March 27, 2025).

► In this context, Yasser Watut, a member of the Iraqi Parliament's Security and Defense Committee, said that the Houthis' presence in Baghdad, which he said takes place with the approval of the government, is intended solely for media and social activities. He stressed that Iraq has provided guarantees and assurances to several international bodies that the Houthis' presence on its territory will not include non-civilian activity. He claimed that Iraq is committed to this matter and has no intention of being part of any conflict in the region: it wants to stay away from war. In addition, a "political source in Baghdad" said that in light of the current challenges in the region and the fear of US escalation against Iran, the Iraqi government has begun to feel that the Houthi presence in Baghdad is a political burden. He added that a considerable part of their political and media activities had been suspended, but the movement's representatives remain in Iraq (Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, April 1, 2025).

US strikes against the Houthis in Yemen

► Over the past week, US forces continued their attacks against Houthi military targets in areas controlled by the movement in Yemen. "Yemeni sources" reported that over the past week, attacks were carried out in many provinces, including Sana'a, Saada, and al-Hudaydah. According to reports, the targets included military facilities, airports, facilities for storing missiles and drones, and weapons depots. In addition, as a result of the incessant attacks, it was reported that the Houthis had launched a large-scale arrest operation to prevent the leakage of information regarding the location of sensitive sites and senior figures in the Houthi movement (Arab and Houthi media, March 26 – April 2, 2025). The Houthi Ministry of Health reported that from the beginning of the current campaign of airstrikes by the United States on March 15, 2025, until April 1, 2025, a total of 61 people were killed and 139 were wounded (Houthi Health Ministry spokesperson Anis al-Asbahi's X account, April 2, 2025).



**Destruction of a hospital in the Saada province as a result of US airstrikes
(Al-Akhbar Telegram channel, March 27, 2025)**

- ▶ It was reported that the United States had stationed B-2 Spirit stealth bombers on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean as a deterrent measure against Iran and the Houthis. The report claimed that the use of these types of bombers significantly improves the ability of the US military to attack Houthi bunkers built deep underground (The Wall Street Journal, March 27, 2025).
- ▶ US President Donald Trump said many Houthi leaders and fighters have been killed in US strikes, which are also destroying their ability to threaten shipping and countries in the region. In a statement posted on his social media, Trump wrote: “The choice for the Houthis is clear: Stop shooting at US ships, and we will stop shooting at you. Otherwise, we have only just begun, and the real pain is yet to come, for both the Houthis and their sponsors in Iran” (Donald Trump’s Truth Social account, March 31, 2025).
- ▶ In the past week, the Houthis’ military spokesman, Yahya Saria, claimed responsibility for several attacks against the American aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman and other American warships in the Red Sea using ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones. He claimed that the fighting lasted for hours and threatened that the operations against the “American enemy” would continue “at an escalating pace” (Yahya Saria’s X account, March 26-April 2, 2025). In addition, he stated that the Houthi forces intercepted an American MQ-9 drone in the skies over the Marib province using a domestically produced missile, the 16th drone to be shot down since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip in October 2023 (Yahya Saria’s X account, March 31, 2025). The US Department of Defense did not comment on the Houthis’ claims.



Houthi operative with drone remains (Houthi Combat Media Telegram channel, April 1, 2025)

- ▶ Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi claimed that the goal of the American attacks is “to isolate the Palestinian people from support and solidarity, while at the same time, the enemy threatens militarily and exerts maximum pressure on Iran, as well as pressuring Lebanon and Iraq to stop the support operations.” He added that the Americans claim that their attacks are aimed at military targets, but in fact they are attacking civilian targets. According to him, their attacks fail and do not affect military operations at sea and against the “entity” (Al-Masirah Telegram channel, March 28, 2025).
- ▶ Houthi Defense Minister Mohammed al-Atifi said that the Houthi movement had become “a force capable of winning great victories” not only for Yemen but for the supreme values of the entire Arab nation, first and foremost the Palestinian cause. He added that “American aggression” will not affect them; on the contrary, their military capabilities continue to advance “in a way that will astound the enemy.” He stressed that the Houthi movement’s position would remain firm on the side of the Palestinian people, regardless of the consequences and dangers facing the movement (X account of the media arm of the Houthi forces, March 31, 2025).
- ▶ Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, and discussed with him the developments in Yemen and the American attacks against the Houthis. He condemned the American attacks and noted that they provide further evidence of the United States’ partnership with Israel in expanding insecurity and instability in the region. Araghchi added that US policymakers need to understand that insecurity in the region stems mainly from “the continuation of the occupation and genocide in occupied Palestine” and that the attacks in Yemen will not restore stability to the region. The Iranian foreign minister also criticized the lack of response by the

UN Security Council to the violation of international law by the United States and Israel and stressed the need for immediate action by the UN to stop their activities (Jamaran, March 29, 2025).



**The Iranian foreign minister meets with the UN secretary-general's envoy to Yemen
(Jamaran, March 29, 2025)**