



# Spotlight on Iran

June 5-13, 2024

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## Highlights<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ Ali Bagheri-Kani, acting Iranian foreign minister, continued to promote Iran's political-diplomatic campaign in the region after Foreign Minister Abdollahian's demise in the crash of President Raisi's helicopter last month. Bagheri participated in a special meeting of the foreign ministers of developing countries (D-8) in Istanbul and called for measures against Israel against the background of the war in the Gaza Strip. He warned Israel from launching an all-out confrontation against Hezbollah.
- ▶ Iran condemned Israel's action in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, in which four of the hostages were released, and called for united action by Muslim countries to protect the Palestinians.
- ▶ Senior Iranian officials continued to express satisfaction with the achievements of Iran and the pro-Iranian axis in the region. Qods Force commander Qaani declared that the "resistance front" was the one making the decisions in the region and was gradually becoming stronger. The Iranian Supreme Leader's senior military advisor said the United States, Israel, and their friends in the region had never imagined that Iran could carry out such a precise and powerful operation as was the case in the attack on Israel on April 13, 2024.
- ▶ For the first time, the Houthis in Yemen and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq announced joint attacks against Israel. The attacks included launching missiles and drones at Haifa and Ashdod. For the time being, it is unclear how the cooperation actually takes place. In addition, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for carrying out five drone attacks against Israel. The attacks targeted Eilat, Haifa, the Golan Heights, and the power plant near Caesarea.

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

►The Houthis continued their attacks against military and civilian vessels in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea using drones, unmanned vessels, ballistic missiles, and cruise missiles. Three vessels were reportedly hit, but there were no reports of casualties.

## Iranian involvement in the Palestinian arena

►Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani, paying a visit to the family of Vajihollah Moradi, a former senior Qods Force officer who recently died, possibly due to illness, said that the “resistance front” was the one making decisions throughout the region. He said it was growing step by step, and all its components were operating on the “path of truth” (Tasnim, June 5, 2024).



**Qods Force commander Qaani (Tasnim, June 5, 2024)**

►Rahim Safavi, the senior military advisor to the Supreme Leader of Iran, said at a conference on the Iran-Iraq War that the Iranian attack on Israel on April 13, 2024, had surprised the world and Iran’s enemies. He noted that during the attack, more than a hundred missiles had been launched within a hundred seconds and that the Americans, the “Zionists,” and their friends in the region had never imagined that Iran could carry out such a precise and powerful operation. He added that Iran’s strategic defensive depth had to be increased to a range of 5,000 km. According to him, Iran reached the shores of the Mediterranean three times: in the days of Cyrus the Great, who liberated Jerusalem and the Jews; in 480 BC, when King Xerxes led his troops from Iran to Anatolia and from there conquered Greece; and after the establishment of the “resistance front,” with Iran standing alongside Hezbollah on the shores of the Mediterranean. He said Iran and the “resistance front” were currently also present in the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait (Tasnim News; Tabnak, June 12, 2024).



**Rahim Safavi (Tasnim, June 12, 2024)**

►Ali Bagheri-Kani, acting Iranian foreign minister, spoke by phone with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry to discuss bilateral relations and developments in the region and the Gaza Strip, including efforts to reach a ceasefire. Bagheri stressed that the Islamic governments had to mobilize all means to fight Israel and send humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip (Mehr, June 6, 2024). On June 7, 2024, Bagheri went to Istanbul to attend an extraordinary meeting of foreign ministers of the developing countries (D-8) on the issue of the war in the Gaza Strip. At the end of his visit to Istanbul, he said that Iran had proposed severing political and economic ties with Israel, boycotting Israeli goods, and mobilizing all the means at the disposal of the D-8 countries to support the Palestinians. He said that all the Islamic countries present at the meeting had agreed that it was forbidden to accept the continuation of the “crimes of the Zionist regime” and that more serious action was needed against the “Zionists” (Mehr, June 8, 2024).



**The acting Iranian foreign minister at the conference in Istanbul (ISNA, June 8, 2024)**

►Iran condemned Israel’s action in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, where four of the hostages held by Hamas were released. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said in a statement that “the massacre of hundreds of Palestinian civilians, children and women” in the refugee camp was the result of inaction on the part of governments and international organizations, including the UN, amid eight months of “war crimes” by Israel in

the Gaza Strip. Kanani called on the Muslim countries to fulfill their responsibility and act in a united manner to protect the Palestinians (Tasnim, June 8, 2024).

## Iranian involvement in Syria and Lebanon

► In an interview with CNN in Turkish on June 8, 2024, Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Bagheri-Kani warned Israel from operating against Lebanon and advised it not to “fall from the swamp in the Gaza Strip to the Lebanese well.” He said Iran was obligated to use its power to deter Israel. According to him, “the Zionists know very well” that when they endanger regional stability and security, Iran uses its power efficiently and wisely to restrain them and put them in their place. He added that Israel should not forget its defeat in the Second Lebanon War when it was forced to withdraw from southern Lebanon. Asked what Iran would do in the event of an all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah, Bagheri replied that Iran had always supported the “axis of resistance” in the face of “the crimes and efforts of the Zionists” and would continue to do so. He repeated the message in an interview with the Russian television channel Russia Today. In the interview, the acting foreign minister said that Israel had suffered a historic defeat in the Second Lebanon War and that he did not recommend that Israel make a strategic mistake and initiate a war against Hezbollah. He said the “resistance in Palestine and Lebanon” could prevent the Zionists from realizing their goals (Mehr, June 12, 2024).

► Stefan Schenk, the German government’s envoy to Syria, said in an interview that Iran was using Captagon smuggling to finance the pro-Iranian militias in Syria and to exert pressure on Syria’s neighbors and destabilize them (al-Nahar, June 10, 2024).

## Iranian involvement in Iraq

► Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia’ al-Sudani met with Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeq, the Iranian ambassador to Baghdad, to discuss strengthening ties between the two countries. The meeting took place ahead of the arrival of Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri-Kani for a visit to Iraq on June 13, 2024 (Mehr, June 12, 2024).



**The Iraqi prime minister meets with the Iranian ambassador to Baghdad (Mehr, June 12, 2024)**

► Sheikh Humam Hamoudi, head of Iraq's Supreme Islamic Council, visited Tehran in early June 2024 and met with Hojjatoleslam Mehdi Imanipour, head of the Iranian Culture and Relations Organization. They discussed relations between the two countries, their support for the Palestinians, and ways to strengthen cultural cooperation between the two countries (ISNA, June 5, 2024).



**The head of the Supreme Islamic Council of Iraq meets with the head of the Iranian Organization for Culture and Relations (ISNA, June 5, 2024)**

## Activities of the Shiite militias

### Joint attacks by the Iraqi militias and the Houthis

► On June 6, 2024, Yahya Saria, the spokesman for the Houthi armed forces, announced the first two operations carried out in cooperation with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. The first operation included two UAV attacks against ships at Haifa Port carrying military equipment. In the second operation, a ship that "violated the prohibition on entry to Haifa Port" was attacked. According to Saria, the attacks were "precise" and were carried out in response to Israel's "massacres" in Rafah and the American-British "aggression" against Yemen. Saria said Israel should expect "more specific" joint operations until the "brutal and criminal aggression"

ceased (Yahya Saria’s X account, June 6, 2024). The alleged attacks have not been verified by any other sources.

►In a separate announcement, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq also confirmed that two joint military operations with the Houthis had been carried out in Haifa Port using drones, in support of the Palestinian people and in response to Israel’s “massacres” (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, June 6, 2024).

►On June 12, 2024, Saria reported on two additional joint operations with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq – an attack against a “vital target” in Ashdod with cruise missiles and an attack against a “vital target” in Haifa using drones. According to Saria, the attacks “achieved their goal” (Yahya Saria’s X account, June 12, 2024). At the same time, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for attacking a “vital target” in Ashdod with missiles and attacking an “important target” in Haifa with a drone (Islamic Resistance in Iraq X account, June 12, 2024). This statement has also not been verified by other sources.

►Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, leader of the Houthi movement, said in his weekly speech that the joint attacks on Haifa had been carried out as part of the “fourth stage” of the “resistance” and that they were the beginning of a course of joint “important, strategic and advanced” operations. He declared that the joint operations would continue and would have a “huge impact” on Israel (Houthi forces X account, June 6, 2024).

►The announcements of the joint operations come amid reports of increased coordination between the Houthis and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq in recent weeks. On May 23, 2024, Houthi and militia representatives participated in meetings with IRGC and Qods Force commanders on the sidelines of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi’s funeral in Tehran. In addition, Abd al-Malik al-Houthi and Ahmed al-Hamidawi, secretary-general of Kataeb Hezbollah, discussed and agreed to increase coordination between the sides.



**Documentation of a joint launch of the Houthis and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq towards Haifa and Ashdod (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, June 12, 2024)**

## Iraq

### Activities on the ground

► Apart from the four joint attacks with the Houthis, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for carrying out five drone attacks against targets in Israel between June 5 and 13, 2024 (as of 11:00 a.m.) (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, June 5-12, 2024). The targets of the attacks were as follows:

- ◆ A “vital target” in Eilat (June 12, 2024).
- ◆ A “vital target” in Haifa (June 11, 2024). At the same time, the IDF Spokesperson said that air defense fighters had intercepted a suspicious aerial target identified in the sea off the coast of Haifa. It is unclear whether it was the same incident (IDF Spokesperson, June 11, 2024).
- ◆ A “vital target” in Eilat (June 11, 2024). According to the IDF Spokesperson, Israeli Air Force fighter jets intercepted a suspicious aerial target approaching Israeli territory from the east (IDF spokesperson, June 11, 2024).
- ◆ A “military target” in the Golan Heights (June 10, 2024).
- ◆ Attack on “a vital target in the occupied territories” (June 8, 2024). Later that day, Saraya Awliya al-Dam claimed responsibility for attacking the Orot Rabin power plant in Caesarea (Saraya Awliya al-Dam Telegram channel, June 8, 2024). It is unclear whether this was an attack on that “vital target.”



**Documentation of the launch at Eilat (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, June 11, 2024)**

### Nujaba’s threats against Israel

► According to the spokesman for the Nujaba movement, the attacks of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq against Israel are the result of the natural development of the militias in Iraq and their objective is to support the Gaza Strip. He also noted that the militias intended to continue

attacking as long as necessary and that they were not afraid of the repercussions (Reuters, June 5, 2024).

►Ali al-Assadi, the chairman of the Nujaba movement’s political council, referred to reports according to which Israel might act against the militias in Iraq. He warned that “any stupid act of the entity” against sites or people in Iraq would be met with a “cruel response” against Israel and the United States. He added that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq would continue to support and defend the Palestinian cause (Nujaba X account, June 7, 2024).

## Yemen

### Anti-vessel activity

►During the past week, Yahya Saria, the spokesman for the Houthi armed forces, continued to issue claims of responsibility for carrying out attacks against civilian and military vessels, mainly in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea (Yahya Saria’s X account, June 5-13, 2024):

- ◆ **June 5, 2024:** Two attacks in the Red Sea against the ships Roza and Vantage Dream using missiles and drones; An attack on the Maersk Seletar in the eastern Arabian Sea by drones. Saria has not reported any hits and the attacks have not been verified by any other sources.

- ◆ **June 7, 2024:** Two attacks in the Red Sea against the ships Elbella and AAL GENOA using missiles and unmanned vessels for “violating the prohibition” on entry to Israeli ports. It was claimed that the hits were accurate, but no verification has been received from other sources.

- ◆ **June 9, 2024:** Three attacks in response to the Israeli operation to rescue the hostages in the Nuseirat refugee camp: An attack on the British Navy destroyer HMS Diamond in the Red Sea using several ballistic missiles. It was claimed that there were accurate hits. The British Ministry of Defence denied the Houthis’ claims (Reuters, June 9, 2024); Two attacks against the ships Norderney and MSC Tavvishi using missiles and drones. Accurate hits were reported. The US Central Command (CENTCOM) confirmed that M/V Tavvishi had been damaged by a ballistic missile and M/V Norderney had been hit by a ballistic missile and a cruise missile. In both cases, there were no casualties and the ships continued on their way (CENTCOM X account, June 10, 2024).

- ◆ **June 12, 2024:** Attack on the ship Tutor in the Red Sea using unmanned vessels, UAVs, and ballistic missiles. According to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), the crew reported that the ship had been damaged in two strikes and the crew



lost control of it (UKMTO x account, June 12, 2024). CENTCOM confirmed that an unmanned vessel had hit the ship, which had recently docked in Russia, causing severe flooding and damage to the engine room. No casualties were reported (CENTCOM X account, June 13, 2024).

►According to CENTCOM reports, this past week, the Houthis carried out 11 attacks against vessels in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden using ten anti-ship ballistic missiles, 13 UAVs, three unmanned vessels, and a cruise missile. CENTCOM forces intercepted 12 of the aircraft and two vessels. In addition, CENTCOM forces destroyed four UAVs, two ballistic missiles, two cruise missiles, and seven cruise missile launchers in attacks in Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen, in addition to a Houthi-controlled cruise boat that was attacked in the Red Sea (CENTCOM X account, June 13, 2024). In addition, an Italian navy frigate belonging to the European Union Red Sea Task Force intercepted two UAVs launched at a vessel in the Red Sea area on two separate occasions. No casualties or damage were reported (EU Task Force (EUNAVFOR Aspides) X account, June 6-10, 2024).

►Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi said that in the week ending June 6, 2024, the Houthis had launched 36 missiles and drones, launched the new Filastin (“Palestine”) ballistic missile at Eilat for the first time, and attacked the American aircraft carrier Eisenhower twice. According to al-Houthi, so far, the US-led coalition forces have carried out 487 airstrikes on Yemeni soil, causing 55 dead and 78 wounded (Houthi forces X account, June 6, 2024).

### **The Houthis announce the arrest of spy network**

►On June 10, 2024, the Houthis reported that they had uncovered an American-Israeli spy network operating in their territory and arrested its members. According to the Houthis, the network exposed was linked to the US intelligence agency (CIA) and had carried out espionage and sabotage operations in Yemen for years. According to the statement, the “network agents” were operated by the US Embassy in Sana’a under the guise of embassy employees until it ceased operations in the city in 2015. After that, they continued to operate under the cover of employees of international aid organizations. It was also claimed that members of the network had managed to influence decision-makers and infiltrate official institutions (al-Masirah, June 10, 2024). The Houthis’ official TV channel presented video “confessions” of the suspects in which they told how they were recruited and acted (al-Masirah TV X account, June 10, 2024). The Houthi announcement was issued a few days after the UN announced that a large number of aid workers, including 11 of its workers, had been abducted in several areas of Yemen under



American MQ9s that fell in Yemen. Damaged goods” (Hezam al-Asad’s X account, June 8-10, 2024).



A Hebrew post by Hezam al-Asad (Hezam al-Asad’s X account, June 10, 2024)

## US sanctions against Houthi smuggling network

►The US Department of the Treasury has imposed sanctions on ten individuals, entities, and vessels linked to illegal Houthi smuggling. The list includes a Yemeni citizen and three Indian nationals, two of whom are ship captains, as well as four shipping companies from India, the UAE, Hong Kong, and Panama, and two oil tankers. According to a statement by the Treasury Department, it is part of a network of Saeed al-Jamal, a Houthi financier operating from Iran who operates communications companies and vessels for illegal smuggling intended to provide profits to the Houthis (US Department of the Treasury website, June 10, 2024).

## Houthi and al-Shabaab relations in Somalia

►US intelligence reportedly assesses that the Houthis are holding talks about supplying weapons to al-Shabaab in Somalia, al-Qaeda’s branch in the Horn of Africa. According to the report, it is being investigated whether weapons have already been transferred and whether Iran is involved in contacts between the sides. The report also noted that this was an unusual collaboration in view of the deep ideological differences between the Shiite Houthis and Sunni al-Shabaab (CNN, June 12, 2024).