



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

November 19-26, 2025

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Highlights¹

- ▶ Iran and the Shiite militias strongly condemned the targeted killing of Hezbollah's acting chief of staff, Ali Haitham Tabatabai, in an Israeli attack in Beirut. They expressed solidarity with Hezbollah and stressed that the organization has a "right to take revenge."
- ▶ On the occasion of Lebanon's Independence Day, the Iranian President emphasized his country's support for Lebanon and its demand for Israel's withdrawal from the country. The Iranian foreign minister expressed his willingness to respond to his Lebanese counterpart's call for a direct meeting to resolve the differences between the two countries.
- ▶ In recent months, Iran and Hezbollah have reportedly managed to smuggle weapons and goods to Hezbollah through the port of Tripoli in northern Lebanon.
- ▶ The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman condemned the IDF's continued attacks in the Gaza Strip and accused Israel of ongoing violations of the ceasefire.
- ▶ The Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned the visit of the Israeli Prime Minister and other senior Israeli officials to southern Syria and called on the international community to force Israel to withdraw from the areas under its control in Syrian territory.
- ▶ "Iranian officials" claimed that Tehran has lost control over the Houthis and the militias in Iraq, who do not respond to Iranian requests. A senior Qods Force official was sent to Sana'a in an attempt to persuade the Houthis to increase cooperation.

Iran and the Militias amid Developments in the Lebanese Arena

- ▶ Iran and the Shiite militias in Yemen and Iraq condemned the targeted killing of Hezbollah's acting chief of staff, Haytham Ali Tabatabai, in an Israeli attack in Beirut's Dahiyeh. They expressed solidarity² with Hezbollah, accused Israel of a "blatant violation" of Lebanese sovereignty, and

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

² For further information, see the ITIC's weekly bulletin from November 25, 2025, "[Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah and Lebanon \(November 17-24, 2025\)](#)"

emphasized the “right of the resistance to retaliate” alongside calls on the international community to take action against Israel. The following are prominent statements:

- ◆ The Iranian Foreign Ministry sharply condemned Israel’s strike in Beirut, calling it a “terrorist crime.” The ministry’s statement said this was a blatant violation of the ceasefire and a brutal attack against Lebanese sovereignty, which led to the deaths of innocent civilians, including women and children. The statement also said that Iran emphasizes the need to bring to justice the “leaders of the Zionist regime” and expresses condolences to Hezbollah fighters and the families of the dead. The Foreign Ministry called on the international community to take serious action against Israel (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, November 24, 2025).
- ◆ A statement from the Iranian Embassy in Lebanon said that Israel’s “criminal strikes,” expanding in scope and not hesitating to threaten the Lebanese people, will not harm the determination of the righteous or weaken their firm will to confront the injustice inflicted upon them (the Iranian Embassy X account, November 23, 2025).
- ◆ Ali Larijani, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, expressed condolences on the death of Tabatabai and noted that Prime Minister Netanyahu continues his adventures until everyone understands that there is no other way but to confront this “fake entity” (Ali Larijani’s X account, November 23, 2025).
- ◆ The Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) sharply condemned the “blatant crime committed by the occupation” in eliminating Tabatabai. The organization’s statement said that “this cowardly act” during the ceasefire is not a sign of strength but clear proof of the enemy’s weakness, as the enemy has reached a dead end against the will of the peoples of the region and the “resistance axis.” The statement added that the “resistance axis” and Hezbollah have the right to avenge the blood of the fighters of Islam, and that a crushing response awaits the “terrorist aggressor” at the appropriate time (Tasnim, November 24, 2025).
- ◆ Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, the Houthi leader, sent a message of condolences to Hezbollah secretary-general Naim Qassem, in which he expressed his confidence in Hezbollah’s resilience and strength and the organization’s ability to overcome difficulties. He noted that “the crime of striking the holy shaheed and his companions” and the Israeli attacks since the ceasefire agreements in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip prove to all the region’s peoples and governments the “deep-rooted aggression of the Israeli enemy in its approach and criminal behavior.” Al-Houthi praised Hezbollah for “its honorable role in the fronts of the jihad and

resistance axis” and confirmed the Houthis’ full solidarity with Hezbollah in confronting “the Israeli-Zionist tyranny directed at our entire nation” (Houthi Combat Information Telegram channel, November 25, 2025).



**Condolence message from al-Houthi to the secretary-general of Hezbollah
(Houthi Combat Information Telegram channel, November 25, 2025)**

- ◆ The Houthi movement condemned the strike in which Tabatabai was killed. The movement’s statement said that Israel continues to violate Lebanese sovereignty for more than a year and that the “aggression” against residential areas constitutes a “blatant violation” of international law. It also stated that discourse about disarming the “resistance” would weaken Lebanon and undermine its security and stability, and that the Houthis stand with Lebanon and emphasize the “right to respond and resist the occupation” (Houthi movement Telegram channel, November 23, 2025).
- ◆ Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, a member of the Houthis’ political bureau, said that “the path of resistance is the only way to stop the entity, which continues its attacks in Lebanon and its siege of the Gaza Strip.” Al-Houthi called for the implementation of the ceasefire agreements in both Lebanon and the Gaza Strip and stressed that they regard the United States as fully responsible for “these crimes.” He made it clear that they are ready to stand with “our brothers in Lebanon and Palestine,” and that they are equipped “with organized plans, advanced tactics, new strategies, and greater readiness than ever before” (Mohammed Ali al-Houthi’s Telegram channel, November 24, 2025).
- ◆ The Nujaba movement stated that it is “following with great concern” the developments in Lebanon following the “treacherous Zionist strike” in Beirut. The Iraqi pro-Iranian militia emphasized that “this aggression reflects the cunning nature of the Zionist scheme in the region,” which is based on “undermining stability and striking the leaders of groups that refuse to submit to it.” The militia expressed its support for the Lebanese people and for Lebanon’s

national forces, led by Hezbollah, which constitutes “a cornerstone in defending Beirut’s sovereignty” (the Nujaba movement Telegram channel, November 23, 2025).

◆ A statement from the Iraqi militia Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada said that “the Zionist occupation forces” sought to break the will and determination of the Lebanese people through the “treacherous attack.” It also stated that the “shaheed” al-Tabatabai was “an example of loyalty, steadfastness, and determination - a symbol of progress, sacrifice, and dedication. He devoted his years to serving his people and defending his countrymen and his homeland” (Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada Telegram channel, November 24, 2025).

► Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei sharply condemned the Israeli strike against a Hamas training compound in the Ein al-Hilweh Palestinian camp in southern Lebanon. Baghaei noted that the strike constitutes a “blatant violation” of the UN Charter and international law and that the United States bears direct responsibility for the continuation of “the aggression and crimes of the Zionist regime against Lebanon and the other countries of the region.” He criticized the silence of the states that guarantee the ceasefire in Lebanon, especially the United States, in the face of the continuation of the Israeli attacks and called on the international community to take steps to “stop the crimes and bring the criminals to justice” (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, November 19, 2025).

► Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian sent a letter of congratulations to Lebanese President Joseph Aoun on the occasion of Lebanon’s Independence Day. Pezeshkian expressed hope for strengthening relations between the two countries and noted that Iran’s policy is based on supporting Lebanon’s stability and that it will continue to stand by its side. He emphasized that Iran opposes any action that creates tension in Lebanon, especially Israeli strikes in the country. He also emphasized the need for the withdrawal of “occupation forces” from Lebanon (ISNA, November 22, 2025).

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi expressed his willingness to hold a dialogue with Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Raji. This came after, in an interview with the Lebanese MTV channel on November 20, 2025, Raji called on his Iranian counterpart to meet with him in a neutral country, such as Switzerland, in order to negotiate a solution to all the problems between Iran and Lebanon. Araghchi stated that Iran does not interfere in Lebanon’s internal affairs but welcomes any dialogue aimed at strengthening bilateral relations between the countries, and there is no need for a third country for this purpose. He invited Raji to visit Tehran and expressed his willingness to visit Beirut if officially invited (Abbas Araghchi’s X account, November 21, 2025).

► Iran’s former ambassador to Lebanon, Ahmad Dastmalchian, said that disarming Hezbollah is almost impossible. According to him, about 37% of Lebanese army soldiers are Shiites, and therefore, the army cannot be drawn into internal confrontations that could also lead to division within the army. Since Hezbollah’s weapons are considered “sacred” in the eyes of many in Lebanon, the army cannot act against them. He added that the army does not want to stand against its people and also does not believe this contributes to Lebanon’s national security (SNN, November 20, 2025).



Ahmad Dastmalchian (SNN, November 20, 2025)

► “American sources” reported that Iran and Hezbollah succeeded in exploiting the port of Tripoli in northern Lebanon as a bypass route for smuggling weapons and goods to Hezbollah in recent months. An “American source” noted that Hezbollah continues to receive weapons from Iran as part of its renewed rearmament process (Al Arabiya, November 22, 2025).³

Iran and the Palestinian Arena

► At his weekly press conference, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei referred to the continued IDF attacks in the Gaza Strip. According to him, since the beginning of the ceasefire, Israel has violated the ceasefire hundreds of times and continues to commit “genocide” in the Gaza Strip and perpetrate “crimes” without being held accountable. He accused Israel of using prohibited weapons, including cluster bombs (Tasnim, November 23, 2025).

Iran and the Syrian Arena

► Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei condemned the visit of the Israeli Prime Minister and other senior Israeli officials to southern Syria and warned of the consequences of the continued “expansion ambitions of the Zionist regime” on peace and security in the region. Baghaei called the visit “a provocative step intended to consolidate and expand the scope of the occupation in southern Syria.” He stressed the responsibility of the international community and the UN Security

³ For further information, see the ITIC study from November 14, 2025, “[Iran Assists Hezbollah’s Post-Ceasefire Reconstruction](#)”

Council to force Israel to withdraw from all the occupied areas in the Golan Heights and southern Syria (ISNA, November 20, 2025).

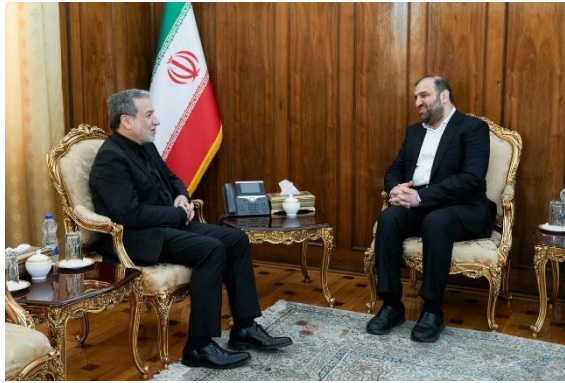
► Iran’s ambassador to the UN, Amir Saeed Iravani, said at a Security Council meeting on the situation in Syria that Iran supports the reconstruction of Syria’s infrastructure and is ready to help complete its economic projects in the country, if the necessary conditions are met. He stressed Iran’s deep commitment to Syria’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, noting that any attempt to divide the country, forcibly change the demographic structure, or establish autonomous regions must be rejected. Iravani added that all types of foreign occupation in Syria must end and condemned the continuation of Israeli attacks in Syria. According to him, Israel’s efforts to consolidate the “occupation” and expand its control in southern Syria and the Golan Heights are illegal and constitute a “flagrant violation” of international law, the UN Charter, and the separation of forces agreement between Israel and Syria. The Iranian ambassador also called for the full lifting of sanctions on Syria and for the protection of the rights of all ethnic groups in Syria (IRNA, November 19, 2025).



Iran’s ambassador to the UN (IRNA, November 19, 2025)

Iran and the Iraqi Arena

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with Sayyid Mohsen Hakim, senior advisor to Sayyid Ammar Hakim and deputy chairman of Iraq’s National Wisdom faction (IRNA, November 22, 2025).



The Iraqi foreign minister meets with Sayyid Mohsen Hakim (IRNA, November 22, 2025)

The Houthis in Yemen

- “Iranian sources” claimed that Iran has recently “lost control” over the forces of the “resistance axis” in the Middle East. According to a “senior Iranian source,” the Houthis and the militias in Iraq no longer heed Iran as they did in the past, and some of them even behave “as though we had never had anything to do with them.” The report said that a senior IRGC Qods Force official, Abd al-Reza Shahlaei, returned to Sana’a last week in an effort to restore Iranian control over the Houthis and to persuade them to cooperate with Tehran more than before, since they are the only functioning group left among the members of the “axis” (*The Telegraph*, 25 November 2025).
- A court in Sana’a reportedly sentenced 17 defendants to death on charges of espionage and activity on behalf of the enemy as part of “a spy network affiliated with American, Israeli, and Saudi intelligence” (Saba, November 22, 2025). The alleged espionage network was exposed on November 8, 2025. According to the Houthi interior ministry, it was run by an “operations room” in Saudi Arabia, with the involvement of Israeli intelligence elements.



**The trial of those accused of belonging to the “spy network”
(Saba Telegram channel, November 22, 2025)**

The pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq

- As part of the report on Iran’s “loss of control” over the forces of the “resistance axis,” an “official Iranian source” claimed that Tehran had asked the militias in Iraq several times not to conduct

training for a certain period of time in order to calm the situation, but they did not listen (*The Telegraph*, November 25, 2025).

► Former Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki, who is considered close to the pro-Iranian militias and to Tehran, said the militias are prepared to respond positively to the building of a state that is based on respect for the will of the state and in which weapons are limited to its hands, at least “the heavy weapons.” According to him, the militias want to address the issue of weapons, and thus, there will be no justification for any country, near or far, to regard Iraq as a regional problem. Al-Maliki also expressed his opposition to forcibly disarming the militias and said that this should happen only as part of a process of absorbing the weapons into the state (Shams TV, November 22, 2025).