



# Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

November 20 - 27, 2024

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## Highlights<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ Iran and the Shiite militias welcomed the ceasefire in southern Lebanon, even though it violates the idea of “unity of the arenas,” and claimed that it was achieved thanks to Hezbollah’s steadfastness. The Iranian foreign minister stressed that Iran would not leave Hezbollah alone and would continue to support it by all possible means.
- ▶ Iran and the Shiite militias praised the decision of the International Criminal Court in The Hague to issue arrest warrants against Israel’s prime minister and former defense minister. However, the Iranian Supreme Leader said an arrest warrant was not enough and that the senior Israeli officials should be executed.
- ▶ Senior Iranian officials reiterated the achievements of the “resistance front” in the campaign against Israel, claiming that Israel is not achieving its goals and is surviving only thanks to American support.
- ▶ Russia reportedly prevented an Iranian plane carrying weapons to Hezbollah from landing at the Hmeymim airbase in Syria, which is under its control.
- ▶ Amid Israeli threats to act against the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq issued only four statements claiming responsibility for drone attacks against targets in southern Israel. The IDF Spokesperson reported the interception of a drone in the Red Sea and the downing of three additional drones in Israeli territory, with no casualties. It was reported that militia leaders had moved to Iran for fear of an Israeli attack.
- ▶ More than 100 pro-Iranian militia operatives were killed in an attack attributed to Israel in the city of Palmyra in the Syrian Desert.

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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.

- ▶ An American research institute issued a report estimating that the pro-Iranian militia that claimed to have attacked Israel from Saudi territory is a fictitious organization of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq.
- ▶ The US Department of Defense reported that the pro-Iranian militias had carried out more than 200 attacks against American targets in the Middle East since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ The Houthis claimed responsibility for an attack against Israel using a ballistic missile. The IDF Spokesperson said the missile had been intercepted before it penetrated Israeli territory.
- ▶ An Israeli citizen who served as a Chabad emissary to the United Arab Emirates was kidnapped and murdered, and three Uzbek citizens were arrested. The Israeli Mossad noted that it was a terrorist attack. The Iranian embassy in the UAE denied Iranian involvement in the murder.

## Reactions to the ceasefire in Lebanon

▶ Iran and the pro-Iranian Shiite militias welcomed the ceasefire in Lebanon, which came into effect on November 27, 2024, and claimed that it was a victory for Hezbollah over Israel. They also claimed that they would maintain the principle of “unity of the arenas” despite the disconnection between the ceasefire in Lebanon and the continuation of the war in the Gaza Strip. The following are prominent reactions:

- ◆ Esmail Baghaei, spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, praised the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon and stressed Iran’s support for the government, the people, and the “resistance” in Lebanon. He called on the international community to fulfill its responsibility to defend peace and stability in the region and to exert effective pressure on the “Zionist regime” to stop the war against the Gaza Strip as well (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, November 27, 2024).
- ◆ In a statement issued by Kata’ib Hezbollah, it was noted that the ceasefire would not have been possible without “the steadfastness of Hezbollah fighters and the inability of the Zionists to achieve their goals.” The militia also threatened that the “American enemy” would pay for its crimes sooner or later because of its complicity with the “entity.” The announcement claimed that the withdrawal of one party from the “axis of resistance” would not affect the “unity of the arenas” and that “new parties” would join to strengthen the arena of struggle. In addition, Kata’ib Hezbollah pledged not to

abandon the Palestinians, despite the threats against them (Saberin News Telegram channel, November 27, 2024).

- ◆ In light of the ceasefire in Lebanon, a “source close to the Islamic Resistance in Iraq” said the militias that are members of the network would discuss whether to suspend their activities or continue their activities in “support” of the Gaza Strip. The source stressed that the militias’ activities had nothing to do with what was happening in southern Lebanon but admitted that there was pressure from the Iraqi government and the Shiite parties to suspend the operations so as not to give the “occupation” a justification for attacking Iraq (Al-Araby al-Jadeed, November 27, 2024).

- ◆ Houthi spokesman Muhammad Abd al-Salam said that Hezbollah, by carrying out high-quality jihad operations, compelled the “Zionist enemy” and its American sponsor to enter an agreement that safeguards Lebanon’s security, sovereignty, and independence. He said that thanks to Hezbollah’s steadfastness and the unity of the Lebanese people, army, and “resistance,” Lebanon had succeeded in achieving a “new victory” and repelling “Zionist aggression.” He expressed confidence that Hezbollah would regain the initiative despite its “severe wounds,” and stressed that the confrontation with the “Zionist entity” is inevitable and that the wars are “rounds of conflict that will end in its inevitable death” (al-Masirah, November 27, 2024).

## Reactions to the arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant

► Iran and the Shiite militias praised the decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague to issue arrest warrants against Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Gallant on suspicion of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the war in the Gaza Strip. The following are prominent reactions:

- ◆ In a speech on the occasion of Basij Day, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei referred to the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court in The Hague against Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Gallant, saying that an arrest warrant was not enough and that a death warrant should be issued against the prime minister and all the other senior Israeli officials. He noted that bombing homes, hospitals, and gatherings was not a victory and that the “enemy” had not won and would not win despite its “war crimes” in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. Khamenei added that

the “crimes of the Zionist regime” only strengthen and intensify the “resistance” among the Palestinian and Lebanese youth and that the “resistance front” is expanding every day and will expand many times more tomorrow (Supreme Leader’s website, November 25, 2024). Earlier, Khamenei noted that “all the political and military leaders of the criminal Zionist terrorist gang must be put on trial” (Khamenei’s X account, November 23, 2024).



**The Supreme Leader of Iran (Supreme Leader’s website, November 25, 2024)**

◆ Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei welcomed the issuance of the arrest warrants. He said Tehran welcomes any step aimed at implementing justice and ending the immunity of the “Israeli regime” for committing “genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity in Palestine” and elsewhere. He added that the continued delay in prosecuting Israel, mainly due to the obstructions and bullying by the United States, has enabled the continuation and intensification of “atrocities in occupied Palestine.” He called for the full and immediate implementation of the arrest warrants (Esmail Baghaei’s X account, November 22, 2024).

◆ Senior figures in the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq welcomed the ICC’s decision: Qais al-Khazali, Asa’ib Ahl al-Haqq secretary-general, called on the international community to cooperate and implement the warrant to stop “the crimes committed by the violent entity against our residents in Palestine, Lebanon, and other countries in the region” (Qais al-Khazali’s X account, November 22, 2024); Ali al-Assadi, head of the political bureau of the Nujaba Movement, said the decision “slightly restores” the movement’s trust in the international organizations (Nujaba Movement X account, November 22, 2024).

◆ Following the issuance of the arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant, the Houthi Foreign Ministry said that “the Zionist entity flagrantly violates international laws

and operates as a state above the law, resulting in the erosion of legal principles, the undermining of international organizations, and a loss of trust in them” (ALYMET Telegram channel, November 22, 2024).

## Iran’s involvement in the Palestinian arena

► Hossein Salami, the IRGC commander, said in a maneuver by the IRGC’s Basij militia in the Khuzestan province in southern Iran that the Iranian people can be sure of revenge against Israel and that the war will continue until it is eliminated. He noted that Israel is being defeated in the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon, the “Zionists” are fleeing the battlefield, the “Zionist” authorities are helpless, their army is tired, while the “resistance” is getting stronger by the day. Referring to the arrest warrants in The Hague against Israeli leaders, Salami said it is a great victory for the “resistance” in “Palestine” and Lebanon and heralds the political end of the “Zionist regime.” He called on the Muslim countries to block the aid routes to Israel and impose an economic blockade on it to bring about its collapse (Tasnim, November 22, 2024).

► Ali Fadavi, the IRGC deputy commander, said at a gathering of Basij members in southern Iran that the “Zionist regime” is currently alive only thanks to the aid and artificial respiration of the “arrogant front” (i.e., the West) with the support of the US. He noted that Israel thought it could eliminate the “resistance front” by killing the leader of Hamas and the organization’s commanders, but it did not understand the essence of martyrdom (Mehr, November 21, 2024).



**The deputy commander of the Revolutionary Guards (Mehr, November 21, 2024)**

► Mohammad Bagheri, the chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces, said at a meeting of the commanders of the armed forces that the response to the Israeli attack on Iran had been planned beyond the imagination of the leaders of the “Zionist regime” and would come at the appropriate time. He noted that Iran’s military commanders and senior political officials would not delay or rush to determine how and when to respond, but in any case, Israel would pay a heavy price for violating Iran’s sovereignty. Referring to the wars in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon,

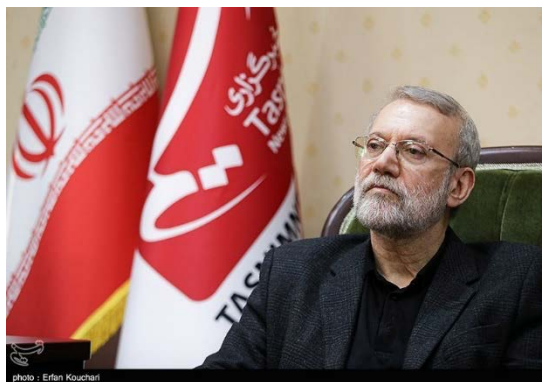
Bagheri said that despite the “crimes” it committed against civilians in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, and despite the military and political support of the United States, Israel has not succeeded in achieving any of its goals in the war. He added that Israel had hoped to establish security in the north of the country and return the residents of the north to their homes, but not only was this goal not achieved, but the insecurity also spread to large cities such as Haifa and Tel Aviv. In addition, the goal of releasing the hostages was not achieved, and the Israeli prime minister was forced to announce a monetary reward for their release (ISNA, November 26, 2024).

►Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Baghaei strongly condemned the US veto of the UN Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. He noted that the American vote reveals the US administration’s disregard for the lives of innocent civilians. He added that the veto marks yet another failure of the UN Security Council to fulfill its responsibilities under the organization’s charter, serves as a license from the US to continue the killings in Gaza and Lebanon, and holds the American administration accountable for its complicity in Israel’s “crimes” (Esmail Baghaei’s X account, November 21, 2024).

## Iran’s involvement in Lebanon and Syria

►Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the claims that Iran would leave Hezbollah alone are part of Western media psychological warfare, and that Iran would not leave the “resistance” alone under these circumstances and would continue to support it by all possible means. He noted that Iran does not object to reaching a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon and that it would support any decision made in this regard. Referring to the Iranian response to the Israeli attack on Iran on October 26, 2024, Araghchi said the response to the “aggression of the Zionist regime” is inevitable and final, but that the circumstances, timing, and manner of response are related to the appropriate circumstances. He added that if Israel attacked Iran’s nuclear facilities, Iran would respond in the same way (al-Mayadeen, November 21, 2024).

►Ali Larijani, the Iranian Supreme Leader’s advisor, said Hezbollah had become a missile manufacturer itself, and that, contrary to Israel’s claims, it continues to maintain extensive capabilities in the field of weapons. He noted that Hezbollah plays a central role in Lebanon and that removing the organization from the political equation in the country is out of the question. He also said that senior Iranian military officials are planning different ways to respond to the Israeli attack on Iran (Tasnim, November 24, 2024).



**Ali Larijani (Tasnim, November 24, 2024)**

- ▶ In a meeting with the heads of the student Basij of the medical universities, Iranian Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarghandi reported that Iran had treated nearly 500 wounded Lebanese from the pager attack in September 2024 and had performed about 1,500 surgeries on injuries to eyes and hands (Tasnim, November 21, 2024).
- ▶ Hossein Akbari, Iran’s ambassador to Syria, said that Iran’s cooperation with the “axis of resistance” is increasing in times of crisis. He praised Syria’s role in the axis, claiming that its aid to the Lebanese refugees provides further evidence of this. Akbari noted that without American support for Israel, it would have been defeated in the first month of the war and that the “resistance front” could continue the campaign for a long time. He added that the “Zionist regime” would never be able to declare victory after the fierce resistance in the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon (snn.ir, November 22, 2024).



**The Iranian ambassador to Syria (snn.ir, November 22, 2024)**

- ▶ Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian met in Tehran with Syrian Foreign Minister Bassam Sabbagh. The president noted that if the Islamic countries were united, the “Zionist regime” would not be able to carry out its “crimes” against the Muslim countries as it does. He stressed his country’s support for Syria and said that Iran is ready to deepen cooperation with all Muslim countries, and this is especially true for Syria (the Iranian president’s website, November 20, 2024).



**Meeting between the Iranian president and the Syrian foreign minister  
(the Iranian president's website, November 20, 2024)**

►Russia reportedly prevented an Iranian plane belonging to Mahan Air from landing at the Hmeymim airbase near Latakia in Syria, which is under its control. According to the report, the plane, which was transporting weapons for Hezbollah and the pro-Iranian militias in Syria, was forced to turn back to Tehran. It was also reported that there is an undeclared understanding between Russia and Israel that Israel would refrain from bombing civilian airports as long as they were not used to transfer weapons for Hezbollah (Sawt al-Asimah, November 22, 2024).

## Operations of the Shiite militias

### Iraq

#### Militia operations against Israel

►This past week (November 20-27, 2024, as of 2:00 p.m.), the Islamic Resistance in Iraq issued four announcements claiming responsibility for drone attacks against four targets in southern Israel, compared to 17 announcements the previous week and 25 the week before (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, November 20-27, 2024). The IDF Spokesperson reported that a drone had fallen in the Mitzpe Ramon area, with no casualties. The IDF Spokesperson also reported that a drone had been intercepted in the Red Sea, that a drone had infiltrated the northern Golan Heights, and that a drone had fallen in an open area in the northern Golan Heights, with no corresponding claims of responsibility by the militias. There were no casualties (IDF Spokesperson, November 20-27, 2024).

►A “source close to the Iraqi militias” claimed that the failure to publish claims of responsibility between November 21 and 24, 2024, was not due to a decision to stop the attacks, but rather due to “the efforts to outline new targets, and this requires extraordinary technical precision” (Baghdad al-Youm, November 23, 2024). In another report, a “source close to the militias” said



that the militias did not carry out attacks because they were setting new targets throughout Israel that they were going to attack (baghdadtoday.news, November 24, 2024). However, it can be assessed that the decline in responsibility claims is also due to Israeli threats to strike militia targets in Iraq, whether as a result of the suspension of attacks or due to a decision not to publish claims even in the event of an attempted attack.

►Earlier, it was reported that the Nujaba Movement refuses to give in to the pressure exerted on it to stop its launches at Israel and continues to act against it daily. In addition, it was reported that there are signs that militia commanders and operatives are fighting alongside Hezbollah in southern Lebanon (Tammuz\_Intel X account, November 24, 2024).

### **Militias' preparations for the possibility of an Israeli attack**

►A “knowledgeable source” claimed that the leaders of the pro-Iranian militias had moved from Iraq to Iran, in accordance with the recommendation of Iraqi Prime Minister Muhammad Shia’ al-Sudani, in light of the Israeli threats. According to the source, the leaders in question were Qais al-Khazali, secretary-general of Asa’ib Ahl al-Haqq, who was the first senior official to leave Iraq and moved to the city of Mashhad; Abu Alaa al-Wala’i, secretary-general of Kata’ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, who crossed the land border crossing between the two countries; Hadi al-Ameri, Badr Organization secretary-general, who flew from Najaf to Tehran on November 15, 2024; Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi, secretary-general of Kata’ib Hezbollah, who moved to Tehran on November 13, 2024; and Akram al-Kaabi, secretary-general of the Nujaba Movement, who has been in the Qom province for a long time. In response, a “source close to the militias” denied the reports and claimed that it was psychological warfare by “the Israeli Mossad and its branches in the region.” He claimed that the information was incorrect and that the militia leaders continued to fulfill their duty as part of the “resistance to the Zionist entity” (baghdadtoday.news, November 21, 2024).

►“A source close to the Shiite Coordination Committee” said that the main Shiite parties in Iraq take Israel’s threats against Iraq very seriously. According to the source, all the senior militia members and senior members of the Shiite Coordination Committee are moving secretly and have changed their locations from their military bases. He also admitted that Iraq is incapable of stopping any incursion into its airspace because it is controlled by the United States (Asharq al-Awsat, November 23, 2024).

► Senior members of the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq continued to threaten to respond to any Israeli attack on the country's territory and made it clear that they had no intention of ending support for the Gaza Strip. The following are prominent statements:

◆ Hussein al-Mousawi, the spokesman for the Nujaba Movement, noted the militias represent the will of the Iraqi people and that they would not stand idly by in the face of what is happening in "Palestine." He added that the militias' drones can reach deep into the "occupied territories," which indicates that the "resistance" is prepared to resist any aggression by Israel or the United States against Iraq (al-Sumaria, November 23, 2024).

◆ Mahdi al-Kaabi, a senior member of the Nujaba Movement, threatened that the militias' response to any Israeli attack in Iraq would be very massive and that the militias' activities against the "occupying entity" would expand. He added that the militias' support of the Gaza Strip and Lebanon is stable and that there is coordination between all the members of the "axis of resistance" in the region (Al-Araby al-Jadeed, November 22, 2024).

◆ Abbas al-Zaidi, a senior member of Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, said that Israel's threats would not stop the militias' activities, but would rather strengthen the unified position of the "axis of resistance" against Israel and the countries that support it, especially the United States. He said the militias had made the necessary preparations to withstand any "Zionist aggression" against Iraq. He also claimed that Israel's appeal to the UN Security Council was intended to "excuse" the attack on Iraq and lead to an expansion of the war in the Middle East (Al-Araby al-Jadeed, November 22, 2024).

◆ A "source close to the militias" said that they are prepared for any scenario. He noted that the nature of the response to any "aggression" would be determined in coordination between the militias, but in any case, there will be a "double response," without elaborating. According to him, the response will not affect the "Zionist entity" but its allies, because Israel cannot harm Iraq without the support of the United States and other countries. The source also stressed that if the "war of genocide in Palestine" and Lebanon did not end, Iraq's drones would continue to strike the occupying entity," regardless of the pressures (Baghdad al-Youm, November 25, 2024).

► Iraqi government spokesman Bassem al-Awadi said the government is making efforts to resist the increasing attacks on its territory by "armed factions supported by parties in the region." He made it clear that the Iraqi government is making great efforts to control the militias in Iraq that use Iraqi soil to attack Israel, and that it is willing to take all necessary steps

to limit the influence of the militias. Al-Awadi added that Iraq would respond decisively to any attack against it (Shafaq News, November 22, 2024).

► Sabhan al-Mulla Jiad, the political advisor to the Iraqi prime minister, claimed that there was no evidence that the militia attacks were emanating from Iraq. According to him, the “Zionist entity” announces operations coming from the east, but “the east includes Syria and Jordan, and not only Iraq.” He accused Israel of wanting to obtain any excuse to attack Iraq and expand the war in the Middle East (Shafaq News, November 23, 2024).

► According to a “security source”, the Iraqi government has deployed many security forces in open areas throughout Iraq to prevent any attack against American bases (dr\_daark X account, November 23, 2024).

## **Report: The pro-Iranian militia in Saudi Arabia operates from Iraq**

► A new report estimates that the “Islamic Resistance from the Land of the Two Holy Mosques” militia, which claims to operate from Saudi territory, and which has issued six claims of responsibility for drone attacks against Israel since October 25, 2024, is a fictitious name for the militias comprising the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. According to the report, the launches for which the militia claimed responsibility were apparently carried out from Iraqi territory by Kata’ib Hezbollah or by Houthi elements (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 19, 2024).

## **Syria**

### **An airstrike attributed to Israel against militia targets in Syria**

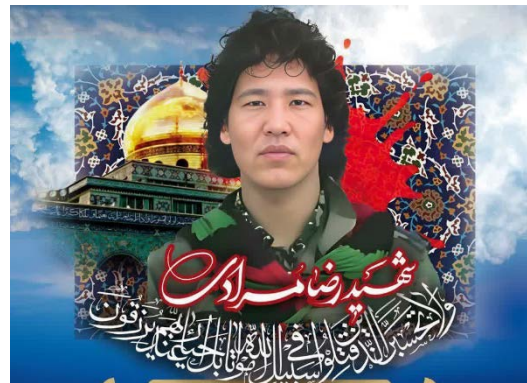
► On November 20, 2024, a Syrian “military source” reported that an “Israeli” attack had been carried out against several buildings in the Palmyra area in central Syria. As a result, 36 people were killed and more than 50 others were wounded, and buildings in the area were severely damaged (Facebook page of the Syrian Ministry of Defense, November 20, 2024). According to another report, airstrikes were carried out against three targets in Palmyra - the site where a meeting was held, attended by senior members of the pro-Iranian militias and the Iraqi Nujaba Movement militia and a senior Hezbollah official; an arms depot; and another site in the al-Jam’iyah neighborhood. According to the report, at least 108 people were killed in the attack, including 73 Syrian militia operatives, 29 non-Syrian fighters, most of whom belonging to the Nujaba Movement, four Hezbollah operatives, and two civilians (Syrian Observatory for Human

Rights, November 25, 2024). Reportedly, among those killed in the attack was a senior Syrian army officer, a brigadier general named Abdullah Ahmed al-Zir (SAM Syria, November 21, 2024).



Right: The airstrikes in Palmyra (Syria TV, November 21, 2024).  
Left: Syrian officer Abdullah Ahmed al-Zir (SAM Syria, November 21, 2024)

►According to “sources” in the Syrian opposition, the targets attacked were used by Hezbollah, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, and the pro-Iranian Fatemiyoun militia, whose fighters are Afghan Shiites (Syria TV, November 21, 2024). The Fatemiyoun Brigade announced that five of its commanders had been killed in Syria “defending the holy places.” One of them was identified as an Afghan operative of Hazara origin, Reza Maradi, who was buried in Tehran (Ayn al-Furat, November 25, 2024; Bashar Assad Faroodi’s X account, November 25, 2024).



Right: Reza Maradi (Aamaj News X account, November 25, 2024). Left: Maradi’s funeral in Tehran (Damash Post X account, November 25, 2024)

►Subsequently, a “military source” claimed that 11 “first-rank” senior IRGC and pro-Iranian militias had crossed from Syria to Iraq through the al-Qaim border crossing due to concerns about Israeli attacks in Syria. At the same time, it was reported that the IRGC continues to build bases for the pro-Iranian militias in the Syrian Desert, intended for training the militias, especially the Nujaba Movement (Asharq al-Awsat, November 23, 2024).

## Militia attacks against US targets in Syria

► This past week, there were reports of attacks by pro-Iranian militias against American facilities in Syria:

- ◆ On November 21, 2024, several rockets were fired at the American Conoco base in Deir ez-Zor in eastern Syria, and one of them hit the supply yard. No casualties were reported (Saberin News Telegram channel and al-Mayadeen, November 21, 2024).
- ◆ On November 25, 2024, it was reported that five rockets were fired at the American al-Shadadi base in al-Hasakah, in northeastern Syria, and explosions were heard from inside the base. No casualties were reported (al-Mayadeen, November 25, 2024). Subsequently, it was reported that American fighter jets attacked a position in the al-Dashishiya area, about 50 km from the al-Shadadi base (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, November 25, 2024). On November 26, 2024, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that its forces had attacked a weapons depot of a pro-Iranian militia in Syria, in response to the attack against US forces the day before (CENTCOM X account, November 26, 2024).
- ◆ On the evening of November 26, 2024, explosions were reported in the area of the American base in the al-Omar oil field in Deir ez-Zor, in eastern Syria (Saberin News Telegram channel, November 26, 2024).

► According to the US Department of Defense, between October 18, 2023, and November 21, 2024, pro-Iranian militias carried out at least 206 attacks against US targets in the Middle East, 125 of them in Syria, 79 in Iraq, and two in Jordan (Open Source Intel X account, November 24, 2024).

► On November 23, 2024, an unidentified drone reportedly attacked the headquarters of pro-Iranian militias in the town of al-Salehiya on the outskirts of Albukamal in eastern Syria, near the border with Iraq. No casualties were reported (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, November 23, 2024).

## Yemen

### The direct confrontation between Israel and the Houthis

► On November 22, 2024, Yahya Saria, the spokesman for the Houthi armed forces, claimed responsibility for an attack on the Israeli Air Force base Nevatim using a “Palestine-2” hypersonic ballistic missile. According to Saria, the attack achieved its objective (Yahya Saria’s X account, November 22, 2024). The IDF Spokesperson said that the Israeli Air Force had

intercepted a launch from Yemen into the Judea region and the Dead Sea before it crossed into Israeli territory (IDF Spokesperson, November 21, 2024).

### **Military activity against the Houthis**

► US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin acknowledged that although the US carries out attacks against the Houthis' military capabilities and intends to continue to do so, the Houthis continue to carry out attacks against aircraft. He added that in recent times, the Houthis have begun to see themselves as partners of Iran rather than as its proxies or subordinates to it, making their own decisions about their military and political activities. Therefore, they will have to pay the price for their illegal and dangerous actions (US Department of Defense website, November 20, 2024).

### **Cooperation between the Houthis and Russia**

► Russia has reportedly recruited hundreds of Yemeni citizens through Houthi government officials to fight on the front lines in the war in Ukraine. Yemeni citizens interviewed for the article said that they were promised high wages and tempting conditions in exchange for their enlistment and were even told that they would not fight at the front, but would be engaged in weapons development and engineering work, which turned out to be a fraud. According to them, many of the recruits were killed in the fighting. Experts noted that this represents another layer in the deepening relationship between Russia and the Houthis, in which Russia is also providing military assistance and equipment that could significantly enhance the Houthis' military capabilities and increase the risk to vessels sailing near the coast of Yemen (Financial Times, November 24, 2024).

## **Terrorism against Israelis**

► On November 23, 2024, the Israeli Mossad announced that Rabbi Zvi Kogan, a Chabad emissary in the UAE, had been missing for two days and that information suggested the incident was an act of terrorism. It was reported that the suspicion was that Kogan had been kidnapped by a cell of Uzbek nationals operating under Iranian direction, who fled to Turkey. On November 24, 2024, UAE authorities located Kogan's body. The three suspects, Uzbek nationals, were detained in Turkey and extradited to the UAE (Israeli media, November 23-26, 2024; the UAE News Agency, November 23-26, 2024).

► The Iranian embassy in the UAE denied any Iranian involvement in the murder of Rabbi Kogan. According to a statement issued by the embassy, the "Zionist regime" and Western media outlets do not miss an opportunity to accuse Iran of being behind the murder without

providing evidence and before the UAE authorities opened an investigation (IRNA, November 25, 2024).