

Iran Update



Kelly Campa, Andie Parry, Ria Reddy, Kathryn Tyson, Siddhant Kishore, Katherine Wells, Alexandra Braverman, Annika Ganzeveld, and Brian Carter

Information Cutoff: August 29, 2024, 2:00pm ET

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events. Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

CTP-ISW defines the “Axis of Resistance” as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually expelling American influence from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.

We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

US and international health officials confirmed on August 29 that Israel has agreed to implement a temporary humanitarian pause in the Gaza Strip to vaccinate children against polio.^[1] The Israeli Prime Minister's Office emphasized that the pause is not related to the longer-term ceasefire proposal currently under discussion in Doha.^[2] The temporary humanitarian pause related to polio received support from the Israeli War Cabinet.^[3] The Gaza Health Ministry announced on August 16 that several Palestinian children have presented symptoms consistent with polio and that lab tests confirmed that one child had polio.^[4] The World Health Organization representative for the Gaza Strip said that Israel agreed to suspend offensive operations for three days in designated areas of the central Gaza Strip beginning on September 1 when a large-scale vaccination campaign will begin.^[5] The IDF will pause operations from 0600 to 1500 local time in the designated areas. Israel will also conduct three day pauses in designated areas of the southern and northern Gaza Strip on later, unspecified dates.^[6] Unspecified Egyptian officials told Arab media that the pause would

not include areas of the Gaza Strip where Israeli forces are actively operating.[7] Hamas initially welcomed the temporary pause in fighting but later criticized the Israeli proposal for not encompassing the entire Gaza Strip.[8] A Hamas political bureau official confirmed that Hamas would cooperate with international organizations for the successful implementation of the campaign, however.[9] A United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) official said on August 26 that over 3,000 people in health teams would help deliver polio vaccines to shelters, clinics, and schools, but that a humanitarian pause was needed for locals to safely meet aid workers.[10]

Israeli military sources said that IDF operations in Rafah caused the “collapse” of Hamas’ Rafah Brigade.[11] An Israeli military correspondent reported on August 29 that Hamas fighters have increasingly attempted to flee Rafah via tunnels north to the al Mawasi humanitarian zone, citing unspecified Israeli military sources.[12] This reporting follows Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant’s announcement on August 21 that the IDF 162nd Division has defeated Hamas’ Rafah Brigade.[13]

Hamas’ recent attack rate in Rafah indicates that the Rafah Brigade may be severely degraded. CTP-ISW has observed Hamas’ weekly rate of attacks in Rafah steadily decline since the IDF began its offensive in Rafah on May 7, and Hamas attacks in August have continued to decline compared to July’s rate of attacks. The rate of Hamas attacks began to decline dramatically around August 13, however. Hamas did not claim an attack for six days between August 13 and August 19 while the 162nd Division conducted its multi-day clearing operation in Tal al Sultan. Hamas has only conducted nine attacks targeting Israeli forces since August 19 as of this writing.[14] Hamas elements can still conduct attacks even if the Rafah Brigade is severely degraded. Hamas has not conducted any attacks in the Rafah area since August 23, however. CTP-ISW will continue to monitor the status of the Rafah Brigade over the coming days.

Recent Hamas attacks have also appeared to lack clear tactical or operational objectives, unlike Hamas actions in May, June, and July. The IDF identified in late July, for example, that several Hamas fighters planned to take control of a humanitarian aid route in Rafah.[15] Hamas has previously also conducted numerous attacks in the Rafah area in which it used sophisticated weaponry or demonstrated significant planning, coordination, and organization.[16] Such planning and coordination would be consistent with an effective military unit. Recent Hamas activity in the month of August have demonstrated neither clear objectives nor sophisticated weaponry or planning, suggesting that Hamas has lost the capabilities to conduct these types of attacks. These attacks appear to be largely simple attacks that targeted Israeli forces operating in Tal al Sultan with rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) or improvised explosive devices (IED).[17] The IDF has continued to clear Tal al Sultan in recent days and killed dozens of Palestinian fighters without any claimed Hamas attacks.[18] Smaller Palestinian militias allied with Hamas have continued to target Israeli forces in the area, however, and can continue to target Israeli forces along the Philadelphi Corridor, even if Hamas is severely degraded.

Iran has increased its stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels, according to an unreleased International Atomic Energy Agency report obtained by the Associated Press.[19] The Associated Press reported on August 29 that Iran possesses 164.7 kilograms of uranium enriched up to 60 percent, citing an unreleased IAEA report.[20] This amount

marks a 22.6 kilogram increase in Iran's stockpile of 60 percent enriched uranium since the IAEA published its last report in May 2024.[21] The IAEA report also verified that Iran has completed the installation of eight cascades of IR-6 centrifuges at Fordow and 10 out of 18 planned cascades of IR-2m centrifuges at Natanz.[22] The Fordow cascades are not yet operational. The IAEA noted that the installation of two new cascades at Natanz is ongoing and that Iran continues to increase the number of operating cascades of IR-2m and IR-4 centrifuges.[23] Unspecified diplomats told Reuters on June 12 that Iran is installing new centrifuges at its nuclear facilities at Natanz and Fordow, which increases the Iranian capacity to enrich uranium.[24] These diplomats and the IAEA report are presumably referring to the same cascades of centrifuges. The IAEA report said that Iran's overall stockpile of enriched uranium is 5,751.8 kilograms as of August 17.[25] This report follows continued statements from senior Iranian officials since early 2024, including a statement from a top foreign policy adviser to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, that have begun to normalize discussions about Iran's ability to procure nuclear weapons.[26]

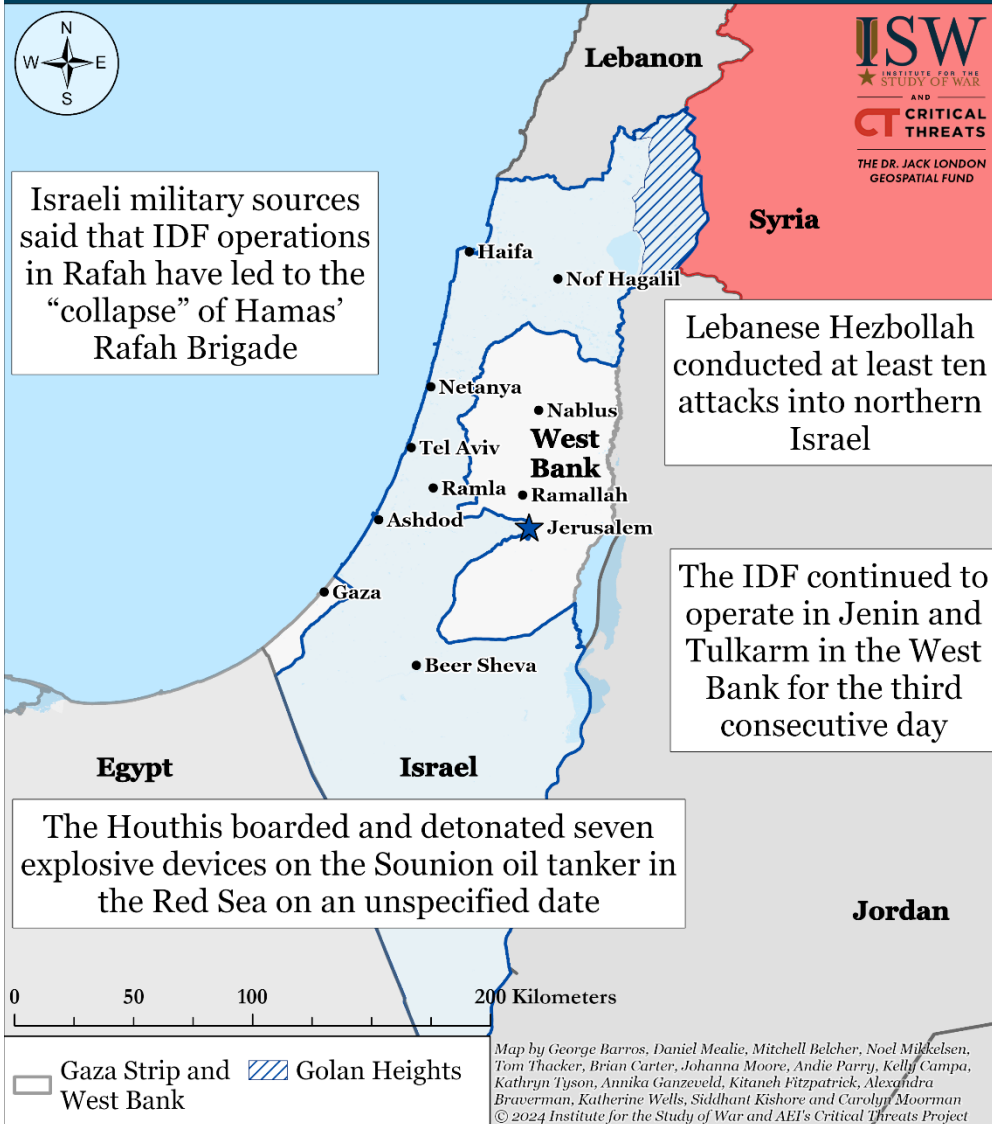
Unspecified sources familiar with the ongoing ceasefire-hostage negotiations told Israeli media on August 28 that Israeli mediators have made “progress” during negotiations in Doha.[27] The Israeli sources said that mediators discussed a hostage-prisoner exchange and the future of the IDF’s deployment in the Gaza Strip.[28] The sources claimed that Israel demanded that Hamas release 20 to 25 Israeli hostages during the first stage of the ceasefire.[29] Hamas reportedly only agreed to release 12 living hostages.[30] The sources said that discussions about the IDF’s presence along the Philadelphi and Netzarim Corridors—which have been the two primary sticking points of the negotiations so far—will take place in the later stages of the negotiations.[31]

Key Takeaways:

- **Polio Vaccinations in the Gaza Strip:** US and international health officials confirmed on August 29 that Israel has agreed to implement a temporary humanitarian pause in the Gaza Strip to vaccinate children against polio.
- **Gaza Strip:** Israeli military sources said that IDF operations in Rafah caused the “collapse” of Hamas’ Rafah Brigade. Hamas’ recent attack rate in Rafah indicates that the Rafah Brigade may be severely degraded. Recent Hamas attacks have also appeared to lack clear tactical or operational objectives, unlike Hamas actions in May, June, and July.
- **Nuclear Negotiations:** Iran has increased its stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels, according to an unreleased International Atomic Energy Agency report obtained by the Associated Press.
- **Israel-Hamas ceasefire-hostage negotiations:** Unspecified sources familiar with the ongoing ceasefire-hostage negotiations told Israeli media on August 28 that Israeli mediators have made “progress” during negotiations in Doha.

Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War

As of August 29, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to sustain clearing operations in the Gaza Strip
- Reestablish Hamas as the governing authority in the Gaza Strip

The IDF 252nd Division continued clearing operations along the Netzarim Corridor in the central Gaza Strip on August 29.[32] Israeli forces conducted targeted raids and directed an airstrike targeting Palestinian fighters in the area. The al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades mortared an Israeli headquarters along the Netzarim Corridor on August 29.[33]

The IDF 98th Division continued clearing operations in Khan Younis and on the outskirts of Deir al Balah on August 29.^[34] Israeli forces directed airstrikes targeting Palestinian fighters and killed dozens of fighters over the past day.^[35] The IDF said on August 29 that residents are allowed to return to parts of southern Deir al Balah and areas between Deir al Balah city and the al Mawasi humanitarian zone.^[36] A Palestinian journalist reported on August 29 that the IDF conducted a limited withdrawal from eastern Deir al Balah.^[37]

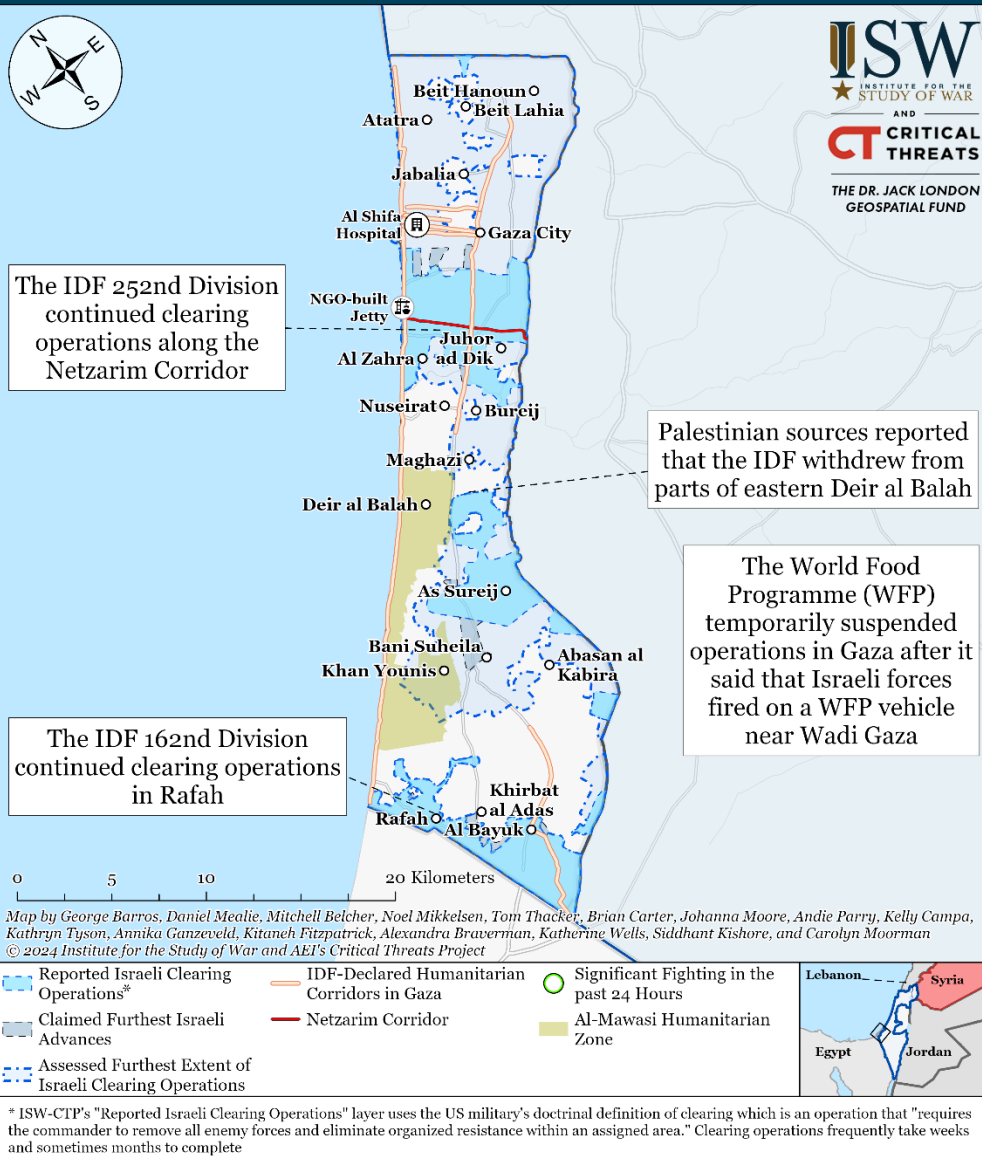
The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and Nasser Salah al Din Brigades conducted a combined mortar attack targeting Israeli forces in eastern Deir al Balah on August 29.^[38] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) detonated a house-borne improvised explosive device (HBIED) targeting Israeli ground forces in eastern Deir al Balah.^[39]

The IDF 162nd Division continued clearing operations in Rafah on August 29.^[40] Israeli forces killed dozens of Palestinian fighters in the area over the past day. Israeli forces directed an airstrike that killed a PIJ military intelligence commander who participated in the October 7, 2023, attack against Israel.

The National Resistance Brigades mortared Israeli forces in the Yabna camp in eastern Rafah on August 29.^[41]

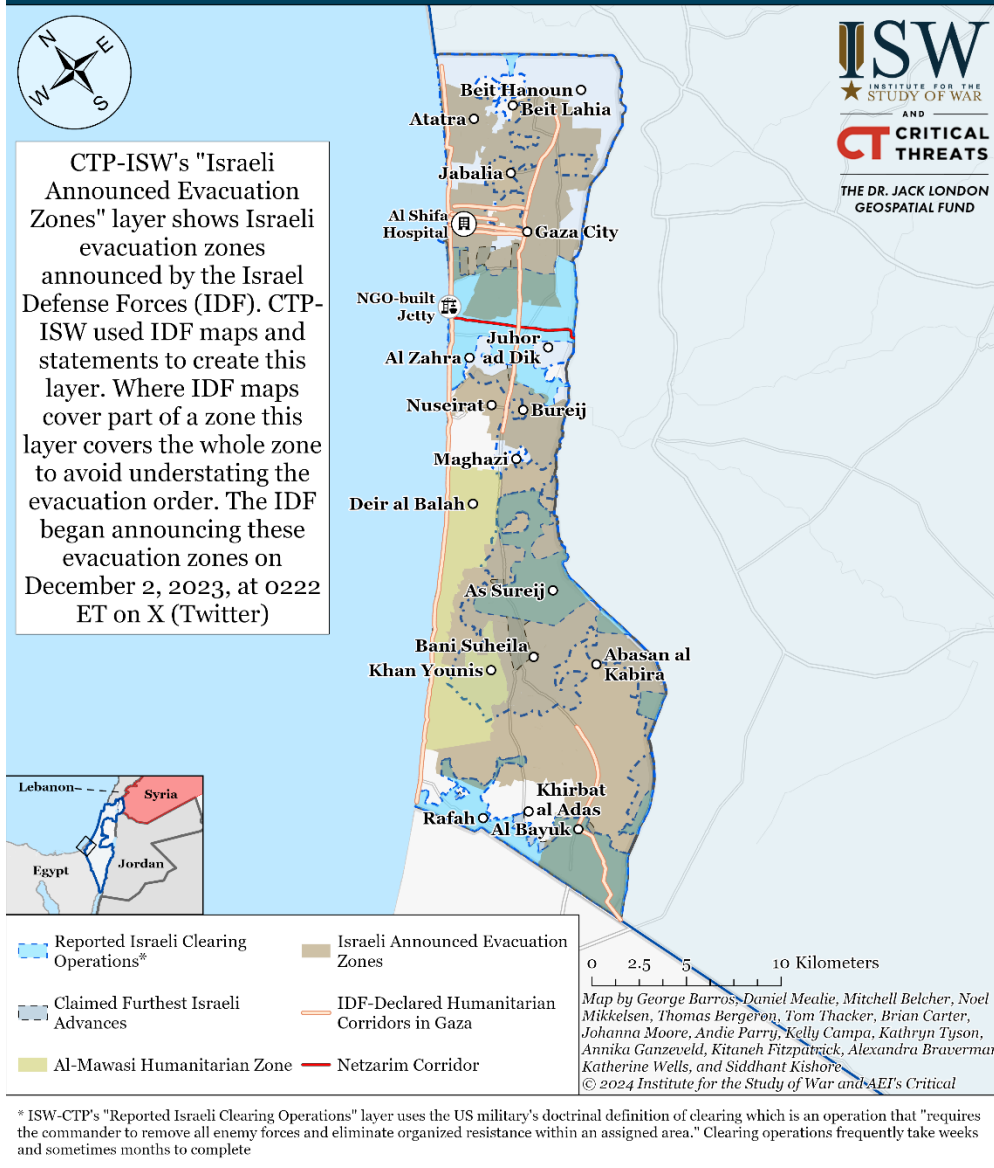
Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of August 29, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip

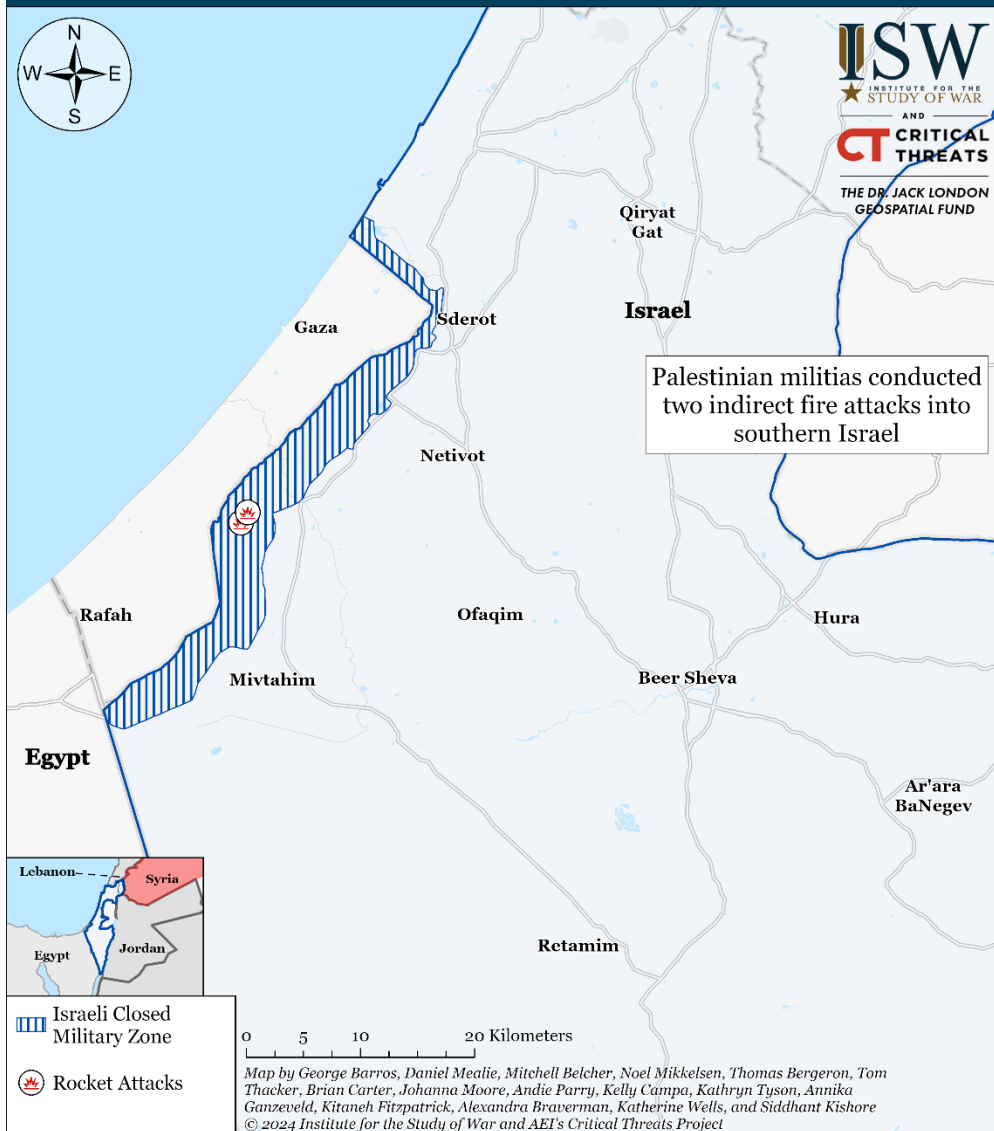
As of August 29, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Palestinian militias conducted two indirect fire attacks into southern Israel on August 29.^[42] Hamas fired rockets targeting Israeli forces at the Mars military site in the Gaza Envelope.^[43] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades launched rockets targeting Israeli forces in Kissufim.^[44]

Attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip

As of August 29, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Recorded reports of attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

The World Food Programme (WFP) paused aid activities in the Gaza Strip on August 28 following a “security incident” involving a WFP vehicle.[45] WFP stated that one of its teams “came under fire” several meters from an IDF checkpoint in Wadi Gaza on August 27. The incident occurred after the WFP escorted a humanitarian aid convoy to the central Gaza Strip. WFP indirectly accused the IDF of firing at the vehicle even after Israeli authorities gave multiple clearances to WFP to approach the checkpoint. WFP Executive Director Cindy McCain described the incident as “unacceptable” and said that it marked the latest security incident affecting WFP in the Gaza Strip. McCain called on Israeli authorities to act immediately to ensure the safety of aid workers in the Gaza Strip. The IDF said on August 28 that the incident is “under review.”[46]

Unspecified sources familiar with the ongoing ceasefire-hostage negotiations told Israeli media on August 28 that Israeli mediators have made “progress” during negotiations in Doha.^[47] The Israeli sources said that mediators discussed a hostage-prisoner exchange and the future of the IDF’s deployment in the Gaza Strip.^[48] The sources claimed that Israel demanded that Hamas release 20 to 25 Israeli hostages during the first stage of the ceasefire.^[49] Hamas reportedly only agreed to release 12 living hostages.^[50] The sources said that discussions about the IDF’s presence along the Philadelphi and Netzarim Corridors—which have been the two primary sticking points of the negotiations so far—will take place in the later stages of the negotiations.^[51]

West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

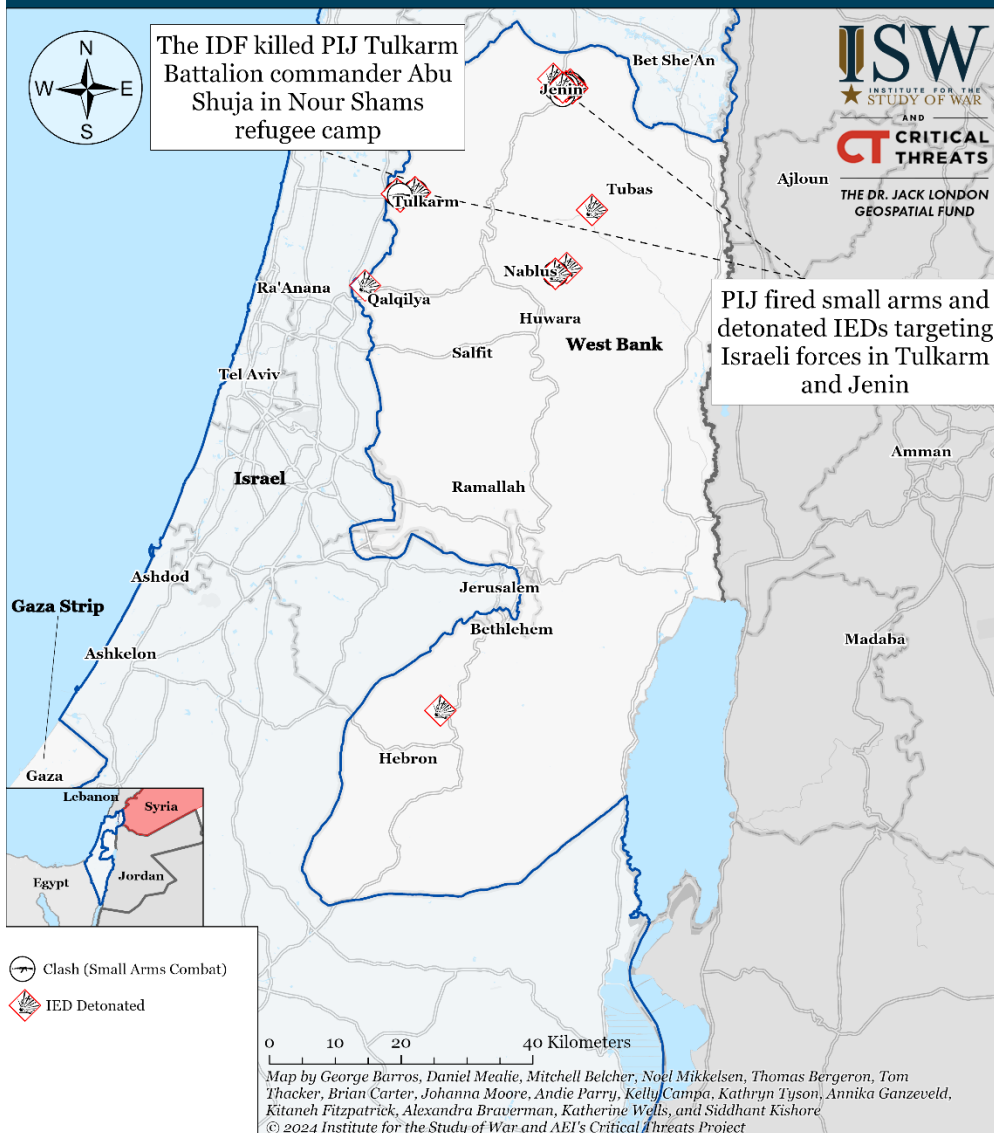
The IDF conducted raids in Tulkarm and Jenin for the third consecutive day on August 29 as part of the IDF effort to degrade Palestinian militia networks in the West Bank.^[52]

The IDF engaged a Palestinian militia cell in Nour Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm and killed five fighters, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) Tulkarm Battalion Commander Abu Shuja.^[53] The IDF stated that Shuja was responsible for conducting a shooting attack targeting an Israeli civilian in Qalqilya in June 2024.^[54] Palestinian and Israeli media previously reported in April 2024 that the IDF had killed Shuja, but Shuja reappeared three days later and resumed militia activities.^[55] PIJ acknowledged Shuja’s death and conducted a “complex ambush” targeting Israeli forces in Tulkarm in response to his death.^[56] The IDF separately conducted a raid in Tulkarm refugee camp on August 29, killing five Palestinian fighters and detaining a local militia battalion commander.^[57]

The IDF concluded a two-day raid in al Fara refugee camp in the Jordan Valley on August 28 .^[58] The IDF killed four Palestinian fighters and discovered an IED production site in a mosque during the raid.^[59] The IDF was unable to safely remove the IEDs from the mosque and conducted a controlled detonation of the devices that caused a fire in the mosque.^[60]

Significant Activity in the West Bank

As of August 29, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

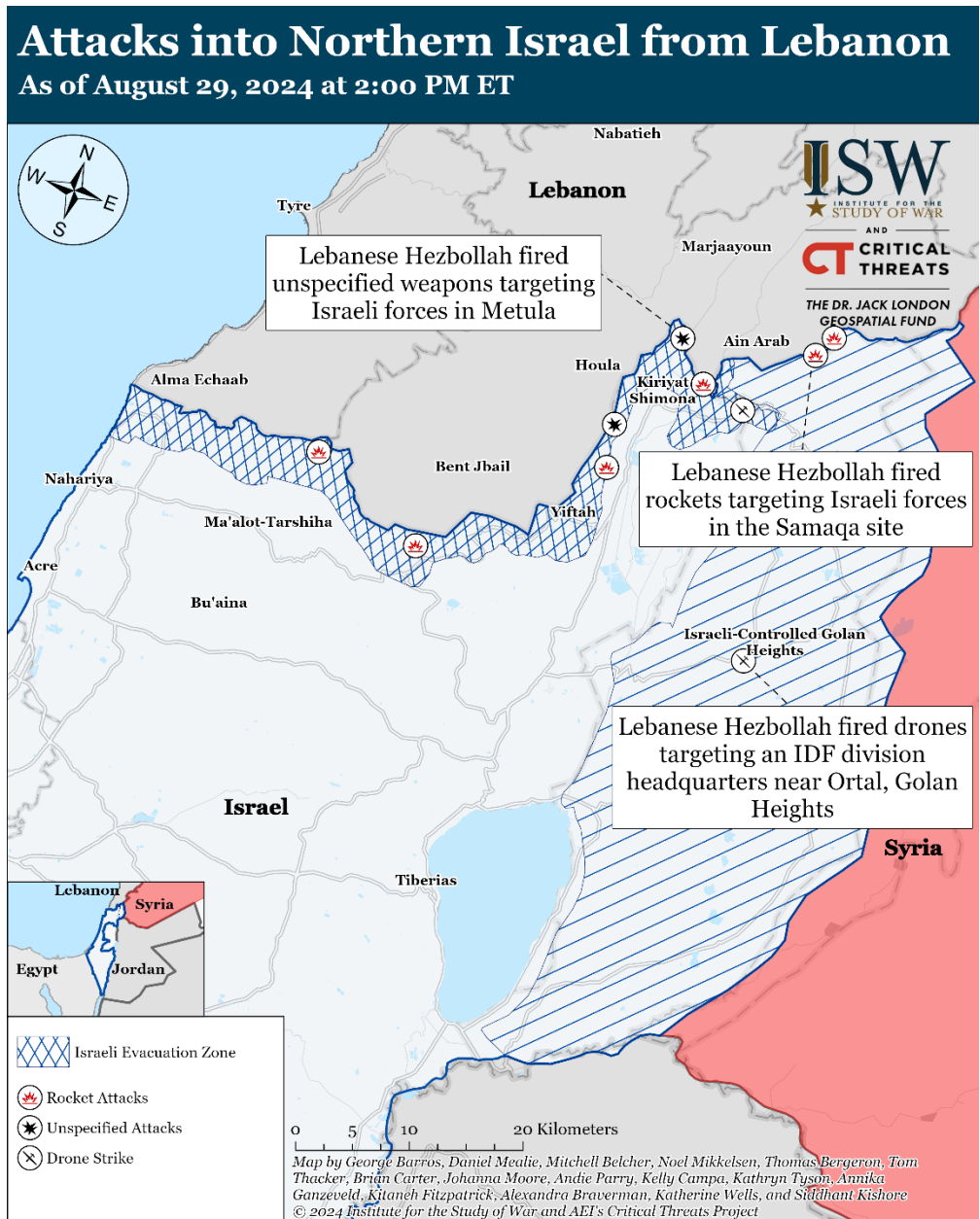
Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Deter Israel from conducting a ground operation into Lebanon
- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

Lebanese Hezbollah has conducted at least ten attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on August 28.[61]

The IDF Home Front Command announced on August 29 that schools in several un-evacuated communities in northern Israel and the Golan Heights will begin classes on September 1.[62] Class sizes will be restricted in some areas, including Nahariya, Katzrin, and Maalot.[63] The Home Front Command also said that schools can only hold educational activities in areas where it is possible to reach a shelter.[64] Israeli Education Minister Yoav Kisch announced in July 2024 that schools in evacuated communities in northern Israel operate remotely in Fall 2024.[65]



Iran and Axis of Resistance

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and President Masoud Pezeshkian met with Turkmen People’s Council Chairman Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov on August 29.^[66] Khamenei and Berdymukhamedov discussed the construction of a gas pipeline between Iran and Turkmenistan and the International North-South Transit Corridor. Iran and Turkmenistan signed an agreement in July 2024 under which Iranian companies will construct a 125-kilometer gas pipeline between Iran and Turkmenistan to increase Turkmenistan’s gas transmission capacity.^[67] Pezeshkian and Berdymukhamedov oversaw the signing of four cooperation agreements on August 28.^[68]

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed a drone attack targeting the Alon Tavor Power Plant in Haifa, Israel, on August 28.^[69] The IDF intercepted a drone that was heading toward Israel from Syria on August 29.^[70] The drone did not enter Israeli airspace. The IDF reported the interception approximately seven hours after the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed the drone attack, so it is unclear whether the IDF intercepted a drone that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq launched toward Haifa.

Russian and Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) media officials met in Baghdad on August 28, possibly to share techniques for combatting Western media reporting about Russia and the PMF.^[71] Representatives of a Kremlin-linked Telegram channel discussed Western “propaganda” targeting Russia and the PMF during a meeting with PMF Media Director Muhannad al Aqabi.^[72] Aqabi claimed that only Russian, Chinese, and South American media accurately portrayed the events that took place in Iraq during the fight against ISIS.^[73] The meeting between Aqabi and the Russian media officials is part of ongoing cooperation between the PMF and Russia.^[74] Popular Mobilization Committee Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh previously discussed security and counterterrorism cooperation with the Russian ambassador to Iraq in Baghdad in February 2024.^[75]

Senior Iranian officials discussed regional tensions and the possibility of nuclear negotiations with European officials on August 28.^[76] Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi discussed nuclear negotiations and the Russian invasion of Ukraine during a phone call with his Dutch counterpart.^[77] Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian criticized the reimposition of sanctions on Iran following the US withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal in 2018 and claimed that Iran seeks to spread “peace and friendship” in the Middle East during a phone call with the prime minister of Norway.^[78]

Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad appointed Hamid Boord as the CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company on August 29.^[79] Boord will serve a two-year term. Boord previously headed the Maroun Oil and Gas Company.^[80]

Iranian authorities arrested five police officers for torturing and killing a man at a police station in Gilan Province on August 29.^[81] Law Enforcement Commander Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Radan ordered an investigation into the incident. President Masoud Pezeshkian also

ordered Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni to form a committee to investigate the incident.[82]

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) reported Global Position Systems (GPS) disruptions in the Persian Gulf southwest of Asalouyeh, Bushehr Province, Iran on August 29.[83] UKMTO reported a similar GPS interference in early April 2024.[84]

Houthi spokesperson Yahya Sarea published a video on August 29 of Houthi fighters boarding and setting off seven explosive devices on the Greek-flagged *Sounion* oil tanker.[85] CTP-ISW cannot determine when the Houthis boarded the *Sounion*. The publication of the video followed statements from Houthi and Iranian officials on August 28 that the Houthis will permit third parties to tow the oil tanker to safety.[86] The European Union’s military mission to the Red Sea sighted fires on the *Sounion* but did not observe any signs of an oil spill or the tanker drifting on August 29.[87] Houthi Supreme Leader Abdulmalik al Houthi confirmed that the Houthis boarded the vessel in a speech on August 29 and warned of further attacks targeting vessels transiting the Red Sea.[88]

US and coalition forces conducted a live fire training exercise in Deir ez Zor Province in eastern Syria on August 29.[89] Local Syrian sources reported explosions near the Conoco Mission Support Site, which were likely a product of the training exercise near this site.[90]

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[1] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/08/28/israel-polio-pause-gaza/>

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[3] <https://t.me/moriahdoron/13281>

[4] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/08/17/gaza-strip-polio-case-confirmed/> ;
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[6] <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2024/08/29/world/israel-hamas-gaza-war/hfo-israel-has-emphasized-the-move-is-not-the-first-step-to-a-cease-fire?smid=url-share>

[7] [https://www.alaraby dot co.uk/politics/%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%82%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A9-7-%D8%A3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D8%A9](https://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%82%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A9-7-%D8%A3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D8%A9)

[8] [https://www.alaraby dot co.uk/politics/%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%82%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A9-7-%D8%A3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D8%A9](https://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%82%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A9-7-%D8%A3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D8%A9) ; <https://t.me/hamaswestbank/53191>

[9] <https://apnews.com/article/israel-gaza-polio-vaccinations-who-042fcd390bda4bb84d429ae3239c5883>

[10] <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/26/world/middleeast/gaza-polio-vaccine.html>

[11] <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1829143254018715821>

[12] <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1829143254018715821>

[13] [https://www.mako dot co.il/news-military/2024_q3/Article-1d897266f917191026.htm?sCh=31750a2610f26110&pId=173113802](https://www.mako.co.il/news-military/2024_q3/Article-1d897266f917191026.htm?sCh=31750a2610f26110&pId=173113802)

[14] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/2958>;

<https://t.me/qassambrigades/31638>;

<https://t.me/qassambrigades/31639>;

<https://t.me/qassambrigades/31640>;

<https://t.me/qassambrigades/31641>;

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[15] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-july-22-2024>

[16] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-june-20-2024>;
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[17] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/31638>; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/31641>

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- [20] <https://apnews.com/article/iran-nuclear-iaea-enriched-uranium-stockpile-9c86e5788a8bb45eab1337d5f6c10121>
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