

Iran Update



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February 24, 2025, Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm ET

The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) publish the Iran Update, which provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. CTP-ISW publishes the Iran Update every weekday.

Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations, and [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of the ongoing opposition offensive in Syria. These maps are updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

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.

Note: The February 24, 2025, Iran Update covers activity in the Middle East between Friday, February 21, 2025, at 2:00 PM ET and Monday, February 24, 2025, at 2:00 PM ET.

The Syrian interim government began a two-day National Dialogue Conference on February 24 on 24-hour notice.[1] The Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS)-affiliated Preparatory Committee started sending invitations to over one thousand Syrians nationwide and internationally on February 23 calling for attendees to report the next day to Damascus.[2] The Preparatory Committee spokesperson Hassan al Daghim said that over 600 invitees arrived in Damascus on February 24.[3] The short notice prevented the attendance of invitees from outside of Syria and likely decreased participation from remote provinces like Hasakah and Raqqa, given the travel and planning requirements inherent for international travel and travel through lines of control within Syria.[4] The conference will hold simultaneous 4.5-hour sessions touching on transitional justice, constitutional structure, institutional reform, personal freedoms, civil society, and economic principles on February 25.[5] Syrian interim president Ahmed al Shara will also speak to the conference attendees.[6]

The conference has not yet met the expectations that the HTS-led interim government initially set due to the 24-hour notice given to participants, which will constrain the ability of many Syrians to attend the conference. The interim government, the Preparatory Committee, and Shara had framed the conference as a chance for Syrians to meaningfully impact the direction of post-Assad Syria and as a gesture of good will to minority groups that HTS would not

assume authoritarian power over the state.[7] The failure to give proper advance notice for the conference is unlikely to achieve these lofty expectations, however. The lack of advance notice means that many Syrians—both inside and outside Syria—will not be able to attend owing to logistical constraints. The conference’s short time frame will similarly not allow for any meaningful discussion on plans for Syria’s future. This may result in a conference that makes few decisions and does not represent large swathes of Syrians.

Some minority leaders in Syria are already expressing their concerns over the short notice, limited scope, and short duration of the talks. A Druze leader, the Syrian Kurdish National Council (KNC) and other Kurdish minority party representatives expressed frustrations with the conference.[8] The KNC condemned the haste, scope, and choice of representatives.[9] Damascus excluded the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces and the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which is heavily influential within the SDF.[10] None of these groups or leaders are representative of the entirety of their minority groups. Their frustrations and concerns do underscore the significant shortcomings inherent in the rapid execution of the conference, however.

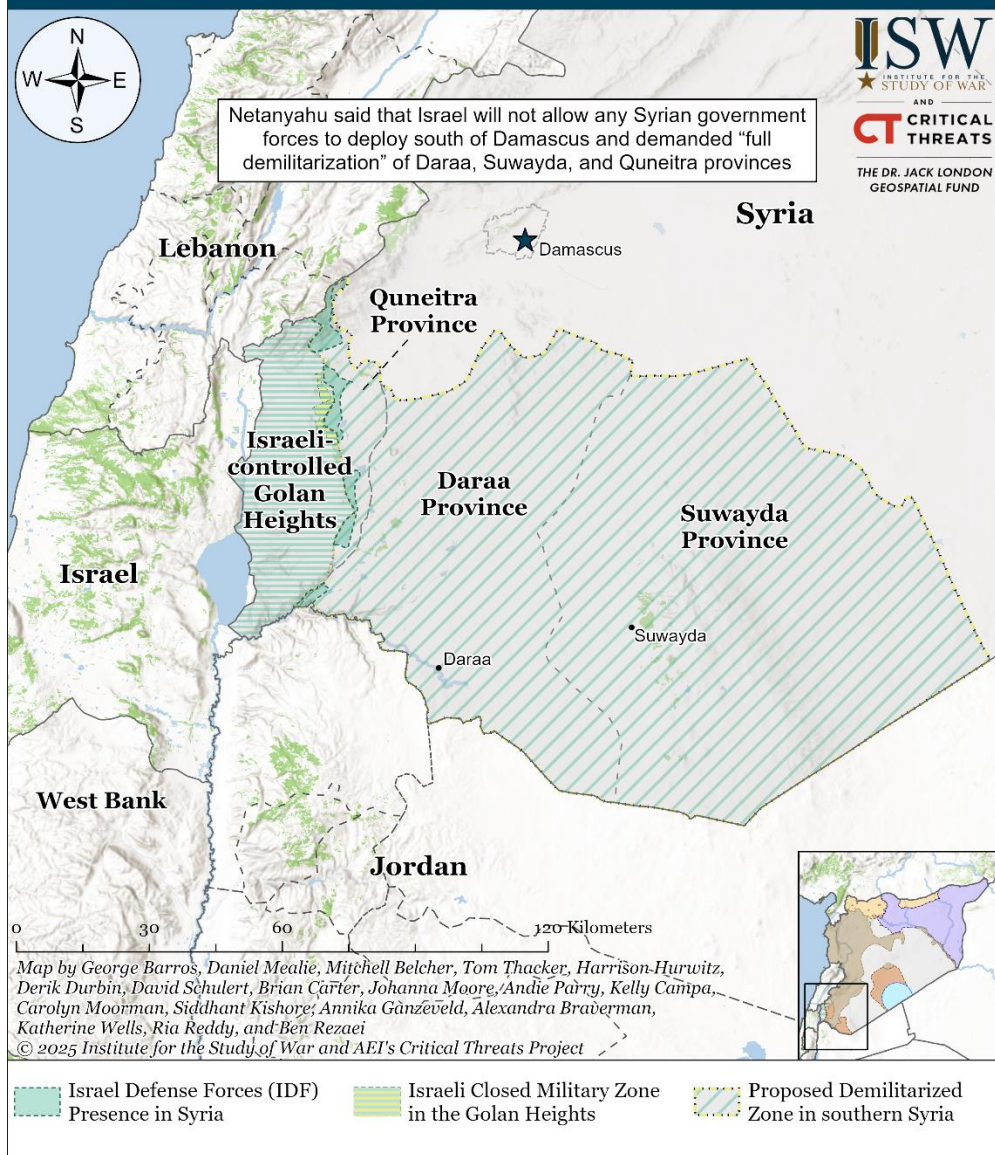
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded on February 23 that Syria fully demilitarize southern Syria.[11] Netanyahu said that Israel would not allow any Syrian government forces to deploy south of Damascus and demanded “full demilitarization” of Daraa, Suwayda, and Quneitra provinces.[12] Daraa, Suwayda, and Quneitra make up 11,241 square kilometers. Netanyahu added that Israel will “not tolerate any threat to the Syrian Druze community.”[13] Syrians demonstrated against Netanyahu’s statement in several locations across Daraa Province.[14] The Syrian interim government has not publicly responded to Netanyahu’s statement at the time of this writing.

Israel has also offered other opportunities to small numbers of Syrian Druze and reportedly conducted a census of Quneitra Province. The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT)—a department within the Israeli Defense Ministry—will launch a pilot program to provide job opportunities to members of the Syrian Druze community to work in Israeli-controlled Golan Heights.[15] Local Syrian media claimed on February 22 that Israel conducted a census in Quneitra Province as a part of this program.[16] Residents of Quneitra reportedly rejected Israeli job opportunities, labeling any acceptance of the opportunities as “normalization with Israel.” Local Syrian media quoted unspecified Quneitra residents who suggested that these moves demonstrated Israel’s “intention to remain [in Syria] for a long time.”[17]

The continued Israeli presence in southwestern Syria will provide opportunities for anti-Israeli Syrian groups to attack the IDF. Interim Syrian President Ahmed al Shara said on January 23 that Damascus does not seek a fight with Israel, but Shara has only limited control over southwestern Syria as of February 2025.[18] A pro-Assad Syrian militia claimed an attack targeting Israeli forces in Quneitra in early 2025.[19] These regime remnants currently have very limited capabilities, but a continued Israeli presence could engender increased hostility in southern Israel and enable other anti-Israeli groups to recruit more fighters.

Israel's Proposed Demilitarized Zone in Syria

February 24, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Hezbollah officials said that they will “support” the Lebanese army’s efforts to expel Israel from Lebanon, which reflects the group’s severe degradation and prioritization of reconstitution. Hezbollah officials spoke at former Hassan Nasrallah’s funeral in southern Beirut on February 23 and avoided direct threats against Israeli forces in Lebanon.[20] The officials instead highlighted the group’s commitment to supporting the Lebanese state’s efforts to expel Israel. Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem said that Hezbollah had entered a “new phase” in which Hezbollah will support Lebanon’s diplomatic efforts to expel Israel from Lebanese territory.[21] Qassem said that Hezbollah could exercise the right to “resist” if its assessment of the situation changed.[22] A prominent Hezbollah member of parliament also said the Lebanese state needed to “liberate” the remaining Israeli-controlled territory in Lebanon.[23] These statements indicate that Hezbollah is unwilling to attack Israeli forces in the short term, likely due to Israeli operations that severely degraded the group.

Hezbollah's activities on the ground also indicate that Hezbollah is willing to shift more security responsibilities to the Lebanese army, even in Hezbollah-dominated southern Lebanon. An unspecified source close to Hezbollah told the Wall Street Journal on February 23 that Hezbollah circulated an internal memo to combat units ordering fighters who are not from southern Lebanon to vacate positions and allow the Lebanese Armed Forces to take control of the area.[24] Hezbollah has historically enjoyed de-facto security control over southern Lebanon and has viewed itself the primary node in Lebanon committed to resistance against Israel. Ceding these tasks to the Lebanese state suggests that Hezbollah has indeed entered a "new phase" that is characterized by its temporary loss of influence in the south in order to prioritize long-term reconstitution and rehabilitation.

Iran emphasized its continued support for Hezbollah and Lebanon in the wake of the October 7 War. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi, Ahl al Bayt World Assembly Secretary-General Mohammad Hassan Aktari, Supreme Leader's Representative in Iraq and Syria Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini, the Supreme Leader's Office's Communications and International Affairs Deputy Mohsen Qomi, and Presidential Coordination Council member Seyyed Reza Taghavi attended Nasrallah's funeral in Beirut on February 23.[25] Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei also declared five days of national mourning following Nasrallah's funeral.[26] Khamenei also claimed that the resistance Nasrallah built would grow stronger. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps reiterated the IRGC's commitment to "liberating" Palestinian lands and warned Israeli leaders of their "inevitable fate" in a condolence message for Nasrallah.[27]

Ghalibaf, Araghchi and Iranian Ambassador to Beirut Mojtaba Amani separately met with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Raji on February 23.[28] Ghalibaf also met separately with Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam and then Lebanese Parliament Speaker and Shia Amal Movement leader Nabih Berri about Iranian support for Lebanon.[29] Ghalibaf told Berri that Iran considers Hezbollah as "part of Lebanon's national security and strength." [30] Ghalibaf added in a press conference that Iran is ready to strengthen bilateral cooperation to achieve "development and security in Lebanon." [31]

Other Axis of Resistance members also attended Nasrallah's funeral. Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) officials attended the funeral, including the Chairman Faleh Fayyadh, Chief of Staff Abu Fadak al Muhammadawi, and Finance Director Qassim al Zubaidi.[32] An Abu Dhabi-based outlet also claimed that the PMF officials traveled with four million dollars that they gave to Hezbollah.[33] Asaib Ahl al Haq Deputy Secretary General Muhammad Tabatabai and senior Asaib Ahl al Haq official Jawad al Talibawi were also in Beirut.[34] Several Houthi officials also attended the ceremony in Beirut, including Houthi Military Negotiating Committee Head Major General Yahya Abdullah al Razami.[35]

Iran reportedly threatened to strike Iraqi Kurdistan with unspecified systems if Iraq fails to implement the March 2023 Iran-Iraq security agreement. Unspecified "informed sources" speaking to Iraqi media claimed that Iran threatened to conduct strikes against unspecified Kurdish opposition groups after Iran observed the groups participating in a military parade in Iraqi Kurdistan.[36] Iran and Iraq signed a security agreement in March 2023 requiring Iraqi authorities to disarm and relocate members of the Kurdish opposition groups away from the border.[37] The agreement followed a series of Iranian strikes against Kurdish opposition groups in Iraqi Kurdistan

from September to November 2022 after Iranian leaders accused these groups of stoking civil unrest against the Iranian regime and described their presence in Iraqi Kurdistan as a national security threat.[38] Iranian leaders have previously threatened to resume such attacks if Iraqi authorities do not completely fulfill the security agreement.[39]

A flurry of meetings between the Kurdistan Regional Government, federal Iraqi government, and Iranian government to discuss border security suggests that Iran may be increasingly concerned about its border security along the border with Iraqi Kurdistan. CTP-ISW cannot verify the reports of an Iranian threat to strike, however. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Iraqi federal government joint committee met at the KRG's Interior Ministry on February 22 to discuss continued cooperation between the Iraqi federal government, the KRG, and Iran on border security issues.[40] KRG Interior Minister Rebar Ahmed and Iraqi National Security Adviser Qassem al Arajji attended the meeting. Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) President Masoud Barzani separately met with Arajji on February 22 to discuss Iran-Iraq relations and review the March 2023 security agreement.[41] An Iranian Interior Ministry delegation also travelled to Baghdad on February 22 to meet with Iraqi officials.[42] Iranian Interior Minister Iskander Momeni met with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani to discuss bilateral relations and border security as part of the delegation that traveled to Baghdad.[43]

Key Takeaways:

- **Syrian Constitution:** The Syrian interim government began a two-day National Dialogue Conference on February 24 on 24-hour notice. The conference has not yet met the expectations that the HTS-led interim government initially set due to the 24-hour notice given to participants, which will constrain the ability of many Syrians to attend the conference. This may result in a conference that makes few decisions and does not represent large swathes of Syrians.
- **Israel in Syria:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded on February 23 that Syria fully demilitarize southern Syria. Israel has simultaneously offered other opportunities to small numbers of Syrian Druze and reportedly conducted a census of Quneitra Province. The continued Israeli presence in southwestern Syrian will provide opportunities for anti-Israeli Syrian groups to attack the IDF.
- **Hezbollah in Lebanon:** Hezbollah officials said that they will “support” the Lebanese army’s efforts to expel Israel from Lebanon, which reflects the group’s severe degradation and prioritization of reconstitution. Hezbollah’s activities on the ground also indicate that Hezbollah is willing to shift more security responsibilities to the Lebanese army, even in Hezbollah-dominated southern Lebanon.
- **Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan:** Iran reportedly threatened to strike Iraqi Kurdistan with unspecified systems if Iraq fails to implement the March 2023 Iran-Iraq security agreement. A flurry of meetings between the Kurdistan Regional Government, federal Iraqi government, and Iranian government to discuss border security suggests that Iran may be increasingly concerned about its border security along the border with Iraqi Kurdistan. CTP-ISW cannot verify the reports of an Iranian threat to strike, however.

Syria

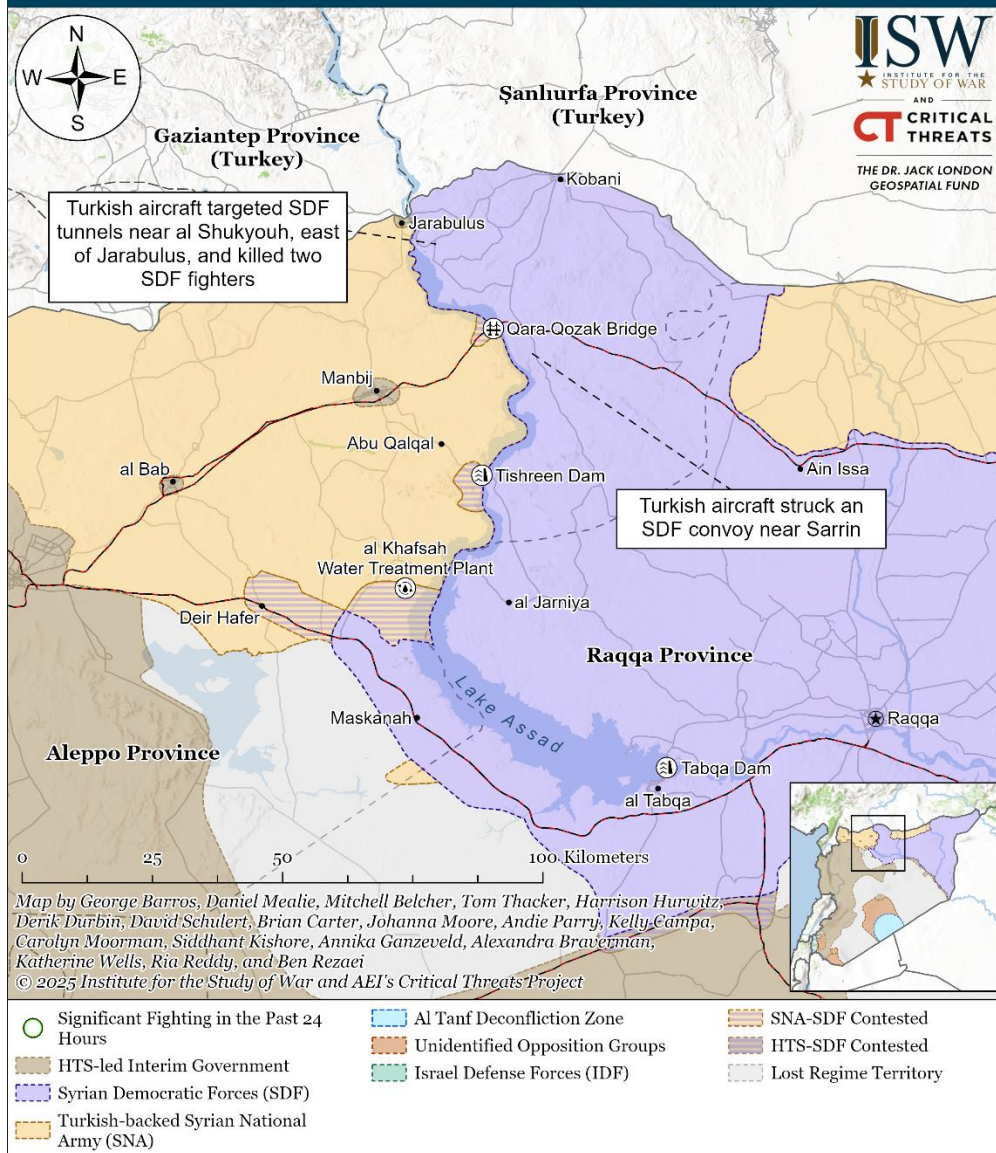
Turkey and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) have continued to target SDF positions near the Tishreen Dam since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on February 21. Turkey and the SNA targeted several SDF positions, including tunnels, near the Tishreen Dam with airstrikes and artillery.[44]

Turkey and the SNA have continued to target the SDF near Qara Qozak Bridge since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on February 21. The SDF reported on February 22 that the SNA fired artillery, tank guns, rockets, and mortars at several villages along the eastern bank of the Euphrates River, including al Tineh, Jaada, Bir Hassou, Sana, and Qara Qozak Hill.[45] Turkish aircraft struck SDF positions and logistics infrastructure, including a military convoy, near Qara Qozak Bridge.[46] Turkey and the SNA have concentrated recent attacks on SDF positions east of the Qara Qozak Bridge, likely to isolate units operating at the bridgehead west of the Qara Qozak Bridge.[47]

Turkish aircraft have struck the SDF along the eastern bank of the Euphrates River since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on February 21. Turkish aircraft struck SDF tunnels near the Shuyoukh hills, east of Jarabulus, on February 21.[48] Anti-SDF media reported that two SDF fighters, including a commander of Turkish nationality, were killed in the strike.[49] Turkey has repeatedly struck SDF positions across the Euphrates River from Jarabulus since February 12.[50]

Anti-SDF media also reported that the SNA shelled SDF positions near Tarwazia, north of Raqqa, on February 22.[51]

Assessed Control of Terrain around Manbij February 24, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



The SDF has begun to supply oil from SDF-controlled oil fields in northeastern Syria to the Syrian interim government. Syrian Oil Ministry spokesperson Ahmed Suleiman said that the agreement between the SDF and Syrian interim government is based on a previous agreement between the Assad regime and the Kurds.[52] An unspecified source from the AANES said that the SDF agreed to send 5,000 barrels of oil per day from SDF-controlled oil fields from Rumalyn field, Hasakah Province, and other unspecified fields in Deir ez Zor Province to an oil refinery in Homs Province.[53] An unspecified Oil Ministry source told Al Jazeera that the agreement will last three months.[54] The SDF's control of oil fields in the northeast has been a critical point of leverage in negotiations with the Syrian interim government over the SDF's disarmament. SDF commander Mazloum Abdi recently said that the SDF was willing to hand over oil resources to the interim government if the revenues were distributed fairly.[55]

Several convoys of oil tankers travelled from SDF-controlled territory towards government-controlled territory on February 24.[56] ISIS fighters likely conducted an attack targeting one tanker convoy between Tal Brak and Hasakah City, Hasakah province.[57] The Tal Brak area is a known ISIS attack zone. ISIS assassinated an SDF fighter in Tal Brak in June 2024, for example.[58]

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov discussed possible Russo-Turkish cooperation in Syria during a meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan in Ankara on February 24. Lavrov traveled to Turkey to discuss Turkey's role as a mediator in Russia-Ukraine ceasefire talks.[59] Lavrov said that Russia and Turkey are "ready and willing" to improve Syria's stability.[60] Lavrov and Fidan likely discussed Russia's future presence in Syria amidst ongoing talks between the Russian and Syrian governments. Unspecified sources recently told Bloomberg that Russia appears to be nearing a deal with the Syrian interim government to maintain a "reduced" military presence in Syria that could allow it to maintain some of the air and naval bases that it used prior the fall of the Assad.[61] Turkey, which has established itself as the Syrian government's primary defense partner, is reportedly also interested in basing rights in Syria.[62] Syrian media reported that Syrian Interim Foreign Minister Asaad Shaibani was expected to travel to Ankara on February 24 to meet with Lavrov and Fidan.[63]

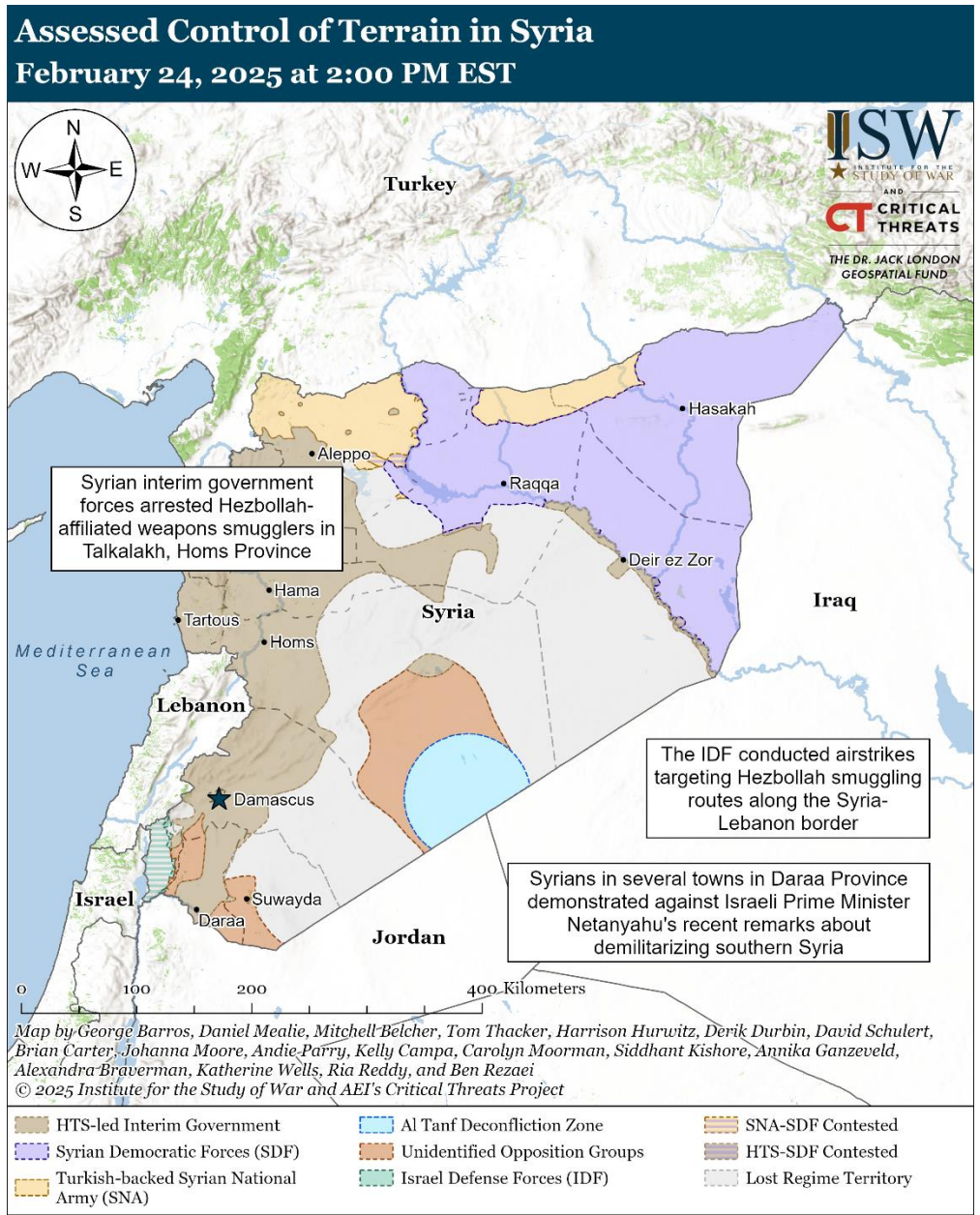
The European Union (EU) suspended some sanctions against Syria during a ministerial meeting in Brussels on February 24.[64] The lifted restrictions pertain to Syria's energy, transportation, banking, and reconstruction sectors.[65] The suspension follows the EU's January 2025 agreement to begin easing sanctions on the Syrian energy, transport, and financial sectors.[66] The Council decided to maintain a range of other sanctions related to the former Assad regime, the chemical weapons sector, and illicit drug trade, including arms trading, dual-use goods, surveillance software, and international trade of Syrian cultural goods.[67] The EU stated that they will continue to monitor the situation in Syria to ensure that the suspensions remained appropriate.[68] Shara and his allies have prioritized securing sanctions relief from the West since it formed the interim government in December 2024.[69]

The IDF and Syrian forces separately targeted Hezbollah smuggling networks along the Lebanon-Syria border on February 22 and 23. The IDF conducted airstrikes targeting Hezbollah-affiliated weapons smuggling routes in the Bekaa Valley near the Lebanon-Syria border on February 22.[70] Lebanese media reported that the IDF also conducted airstrikes in the Baalbek and Hermel districts on February 23.[71] Syrian media reported that Syrian interim government forces arrested likely Hezbollah-affiliated weapons smugglers in Talkalakh, Homs Province, on February 23.[72] Syrian security forces have recently thwarted several other Hezbollah smuggling attempts along the border.[73]

The IDF reported on February 24 that elements of the IDF 474th Territorial Brigade (210th Division) destroyed weapons in unspecified areas of the Israel-Syria disengagement zone.[74] The IDF located and destroyed missiles, improvised explosive devices, and armored vehicles that previously belonged to the Assad regime.

Syrian media reported that the US-led international coalition conducted a drone strike targeting a vehicle in northern Idlib Province, on February 23.[75] The drone strike reportedly killed a former Hurras al Din member.[76] US Central Command (CENTCOM) previously

struck a vehicle killing a Hurras al Din member in northern Idlib Province on February 21.[77] Hurras al Din was al Qaeda’s Syrian affiliate before its dissolution.



Iraq

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Strengthen Iranian and Axis of Resistance influence over the Iraqi state and society
- Harden the Iraqi government against internal dissent

Iraqi Sunni political parties are continuing to form alliances with one another ahead of the October 2025 parliamentary elections. The Muttahidoon Party, which is led by former

Parliament Speaker Osama al Nujaifi, allied with prominent Sunni politician Muthanna al Samarrai's Azm Alliance on February 20.[78] The Azm Alliance is part of the United Sunni Leadership Coalition, which was formed by five notable Iraqi Sunni politicians in early January 2024.[79] The Muttahidoon Party is not part of the United Sunni Leadership Coalition. Osama al Nujaifi was one of six prominent Iraqi Sunni politicians who signed a statement in December 2024 calling for a "comprehensive national dialogue" to address political and economic grievances.[80] Ninewa Province governor and Osama's brother, Atheel al Nujaifi, separately announced the formation of the National Path Party on February 22.[81] Atheel was previously a member of his brother's Muttahidoon Party.[82]

Iraqi media reported on February 24 that a 17-year-old boy painted an Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) logo on the wall of a school in Jisr Diyala in southeastern Baghdad.[83] Iraqi police recently arrested a student in December 2024 for similarly writing "slogans glorifying ISIS" at a school in al Zafaraniya, which borders Jisr Diyala.[84] Jisr Diyala and al Zafaraniya are predominantly Shia neighborhoods that ISIS frequently attacked in the mid-2010s.[85]

Iraq repatriated 165 families of ISIS members from al Hol camp in northeastern Syria on February 23.[86] The families will undergo "social rehabilitation" at al Jadaa camp in Ninewa Province. The repatriation of these families marks the 24th time that Iraqi families in al Hol have returned to Iraq.[87]

Prominent Sunni politician and former Parliament Speaker Mohammad al Halbousi called on February 22 for the creation of a "binding" political agreement to resolve challenges between Iraqi political forces.[88] Halbousi stated that the agreement would be "parallel to the constitution" and that "no one [would be able to] back down" from the agreement. Halbousi likely called for the creation of a "binding" political agreement because some Iranian-backed actors have sought to block the implementation of an agreement that Sunni and Kurdish political parties reached with members of the Shia Coordination Framework after the October 2021 parliamentary elections. This agreement, which enabled Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani to come to power, reportedly stipulated that the Iraqi government would pass an amendment to the General Amnesty Law demanded by Sunni parties.[89] The Iraqi parliament passed the amendment in late January 2025, but former Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki and other Shia Coordination Framework members have since then sought to prevent the implementation of the law.[90]

The Sadrist Movement formed a committee on February 22 to "investigate and follow up" on the cases of individuals who could receive amnesty under the General Amnesty Law.[91] The Iraqi parliament passed an amendment to the general amnesty law in late January 2025.[92] This law will grant amnesty to many Iraqis, but Iraqi Shia nationalist cleric Muqtada al Sadr likely primarily seeks amnesty for Sadrists. Sadr called for the release of Sadrists from prison in late January 2025.[93] Some Iraqi parliamentarians interpreted his statement as an implicit endorsement for the passage of the General Amnesty Law amendment.[94] The Sadrist Movement cannot independently grant amnesty to its supporters. The movement will thus likely investigate the cases of individuals who qualify for amnesty and report their findings to the body that is responsible for adjudicating amnesty cases.

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) head Bafel Talabani stated on February 24 that the PUK will form a "united Kurdish bloc" with the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and

other Kurdish parties ahead of the Iraqi parliamentary elections in October 2025.[95]

The Iraqi Kurds would have significant influence in the upcoming elections if the KDP and the PUK successfully form this alliance. The KDP allied with Sadr's movement and Mohammad al Halbousi's Progress Party after the 2021 elections.[96] The PUK allied with the Shia Coordination Framework.[97] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose collection of Shia parties, some of which are backed by Iran.

Turkey continued to attack the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Duhok Province, Iraqi Kurdistan, since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on February 21.

The Turkish Defense Ministry announced on February 22 that a Turkish airstrike in Ghara killed five PKK fighters.[98] Iraqi media reported on February 23 that Turkey separately struck PKK positions near Balafa village.[99] Turkish forces also reportedly engaged PKK fighters near Sarkali village, Amedi district, on February 23.[100]

Arabian Peninsula

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Harden the Houthi regime against internal dissent in Houthi-controlled areas
- Destroy the anti-Houthi opposition in order to control all of Yemen
- Erode Israeli will to continue the war in the Gaza Strip

Two unspecified US officials told Reuters on February 22 that the Houthis unsuccessfully launched an unspecified number of surface-to-air missiles targeting a US F-16 fighter jet and an MQ-9 Reaper drone.[101] Houthi media circulated the Reuters report but omitted that the Houthis failed to hit either targets.[102] The Houthis have previously claimed to have taken down 14 US MQ-9 Reaper drones.[103] This is the first time that the Houthis have reportedly targeted US fighter jets.

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

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
- Rebuild and reestablish Hezbollah in southern Lebanon
- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

See topline section.

Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

Iranian Artesh Coordination Deputy Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari announced the beginning of the Artesh military exercise "Zolfaghar 1403" on February 22 across the Makran coast, Sea of Oman, and northern Indian Ocean.[104] The Ground Force Aviation Cobra attack and Bell 212 helicopters flew from Artesh Navy vessels off the Makran Coast during the

exercise.[105] The Artesh tested torpedoes in the Sea of Oman.[106] An Iranian MiG-29 fighter jet reportedly intercepted a Karrar drone during the exercise and F-4 Phantoms conducted air-to-air refueling and destroyed predetermined targets using 250-pound Ghaem-5 bombs.[107]

The Artesh Navy *Dena* destroyer and the IRGC Navy *Shahid Mahdavi* forward base ship arrived at Port Klang, Malaysia, on February 21.[108] This marks the first Iranian naval visit to the Malacca Strait.[109] Iranian Artesh Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani confirmed the Navy's presence across the Indian Ocean, with five operational and training flotillas deployed simultaneously, including at the Malacca Strait and near the Gulf of Aden.[110]

The Iranian rial appreciated from 930,700 rials to one US dollar on February 21 to 912,900 rials to one US dollar on February 24.[111]

Jaish al Adl, a Balochi Salafi-jihadi militia, claimed two separate attacks in Sistan and Baluchistan Province on February 22.[112] The group targeted an Iranian Law Enforcement Command (LEC) officer in Khash and bombed the "Islamic Revolution Housing Foundation" in Chabahar.

The United States sanctioned 5 individuals and 17 entities and vessels and identified 13 vessels as blocked property on February 24 as part of US "maximum pressure" sanctions targeting illicit Iranian oil and petrochemical exports.[113] The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) updated its Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list and designated five Iranian individuals for their roles in the Iranian petroleum industry, including senior officials from the Iranian Oil Terminals Company.[114] OFAC sanctioned 17 entities across the UAE, India, Malaysia, Seychelles, Liberia, and China. OFAC also identified 13 vessels as blocked property due to their involvement in illicit oil transport. US President Donald Trump re-enforced "maximum pressure" sanctions on Iran on February 4 to deny all paths to nuclear weapons, curtail the Iranian ballistic missile program, and halt its support for terrorist groups.[115]

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.

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.



- [1] https://x.com/NPA_Arabic/status/1894043117013118980 ;
https://x.com/Charles_Lister/status/1893660665010671786 ;
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- [4] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/syria-hold-dialogue-conference-amid-criticism-over-inclusivity-2025-02-24/>
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