

## Iran Update, January 15, 2025

**Kelly Campa, Annika Ganzeveld, Siddhant Kishore, Andie Parry, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Ria Reddy, Ben Rezaei, Avery Borens, and Brian Carter**

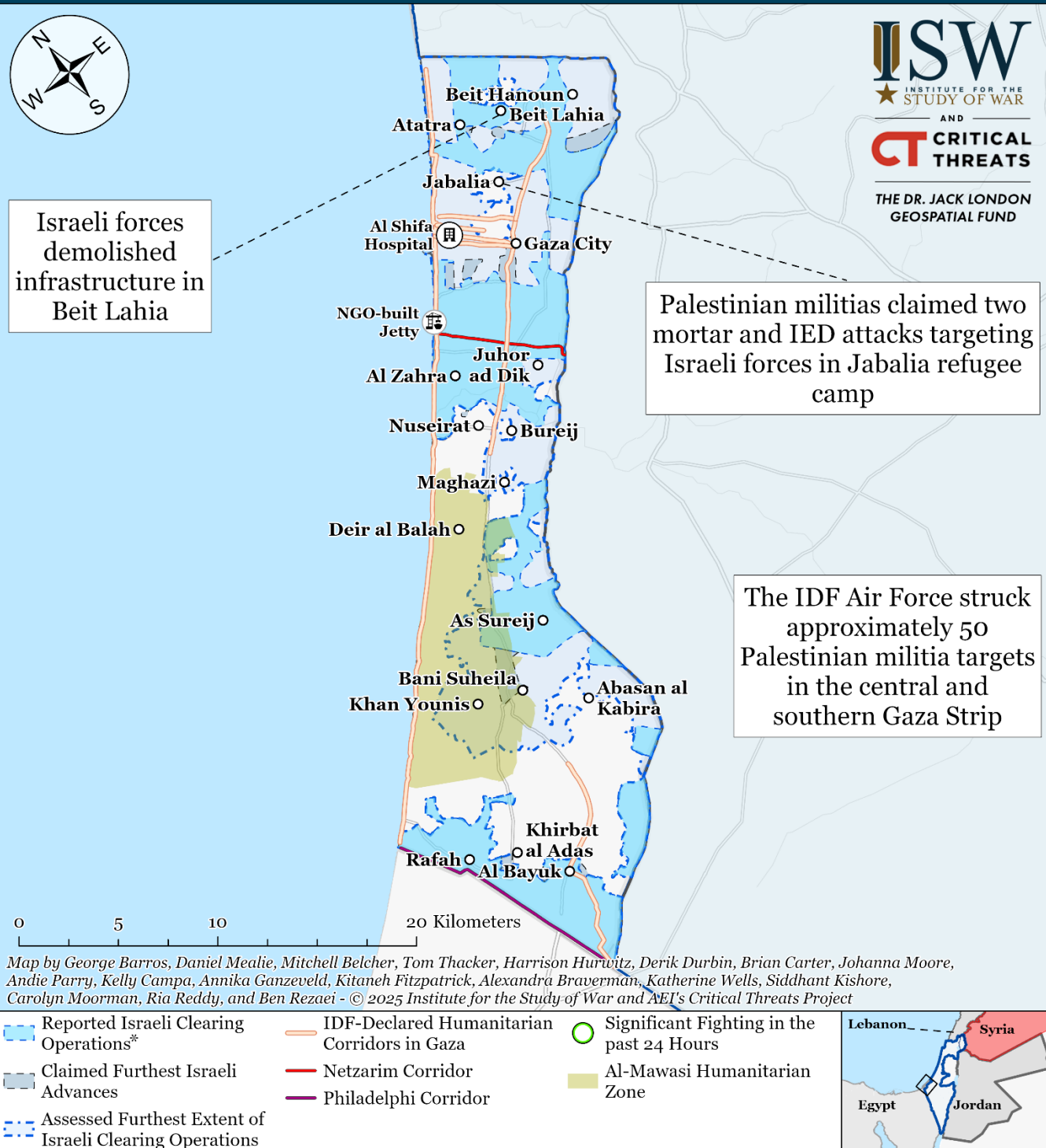
**Information Cutoff: 2:00pm ET**

**Israel and Hamas approved a ceasefire-hostage agreement on January 15.**<sup>[1]</sup> **Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani announced that mediators from the United States, Qatar, and Egypt will monitor the ceasefire, which will take effect on January 19.**<sup>[2]</sup> Hamas confirmed that it agreed to the final draft agreement on January 15.<sup>[3]</sup> The agreement outlines three phases, as proposed by US President Joe Biden in May 2024.<sup>[4]</sup> During the first phase, which will last for 42 days beginning on January 19, Hamas must release 33 hostages.<sup>[5]</sup> The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) will gradually withdraw from the central Gaza Strip to an 800-meter-deep buffer zone along the Gaza Strip's eastern and northern boundaries during the first phase.<sup>[6]</sup> Reuters reported that "Israel will release 30 Palestinian prisoners for every Israeli civilian and 50 Palestinian prisoners for every female Israeli soldier that Hamas releases."<sup>[7]</sup> Israel will also allow displaced Gazans to return to the northern Gaza Strip during this phase.<sup>[8]</sup> Israel and Hamas will begin negotiations on the 16th day of the ceasefire to secure the release of the remaining Israeli hostages, a complete IDF withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, and a permanent ceasefire.<sup>[9]</sup> This presumably means that if negotiations for the second phase of the ceasefire fail, the fighting would resume. The third phase of the ceasefire reportedly includes provisions for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip supervised by Egypt, Qatar, and the United Nations.<sup>[10]</sup>

Hamas appears to have agreed to allow the IDF to remain in the Philadelphi Corridor, an operationally and strategically significant IDF-held area in the southern Gaza Strip, during at least the first phase of the ceasefire.<sup>[11]</sup> The withdrawal of the IDF from the Philadelphi Corridor was a major point of contention between Israel and Hamas during the ceasefire talks.<sup>[12]</sup> Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office announced on January 15 that Hamas "backed down" on its demand for an IDF withdrawal from the corridor "at the last minute."<sup>[13]</sup>

# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

## As of January 15, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



\* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete

**A large number of Iraqi political parties boycotted parliament on January 15, likely to demonstrate their ability to rally sufficient support to block parliament.**[14] Iraqi media reported that “the majority of [political] blocs” boycotted parliament because Parliament Speaker Mahmoud Mashhadani and the two deputy speakers did not place the General Amnesty Law on Parliament’s agenda.[15] The Iraqi Parliament Speaker and the two deputies are responsible for “jointly” determining the agenda.[16] The General Amnesty Law would grant amnesty to many Iraqis, including some who were arrested under Article 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Law.[17] This law has been a long-standing demand of Sunni political parties in Iraq and was part of the “political agreement paper” that enabled the formation of Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani’s administration in 2022.[18] Former Parliament Speaker Mohammad al Halbousi’s Progress Party announced on January 13 that it would boycott parliament until the speaker places the General Amnesty Law on Parliament’s agenda.[19] The newly-formed United Sunni Leadership Coalition separately discussed the implementation of the General Amnesty Law in a meeting on January 11 suggesting that this coalition may have boycotted parliament on January 15 as well.[20] This coalition includes Sovereignty Alliance leader Khamis al Khanjar, Azm Alliance leader Muthanna al Samarrai, and Mashhadani, among others.[21]

Mashhadani and his allies, including the United Sunni Leadership Coalition, may also have deliberately blocked the General Amnesty Law in order to block the passage of the Intelligence Service Law, which was also on the agenda.[22] The Intelligence Service Law was also on the December 5, 2024, agenda but Parliament again failed to reach quorum.[23] There are no other laws on both the December 5 and January 15, 2025, agendas.[24] A member of the Parliamentary Defense and Security Committee told Iraqi media that the Intelligence Service Law expanded the “legal cover” for the Iraqi National Intelligence Service, which is now led by an Iranian-backed Badr Organization-linked director.[25] The Parliamentary boycott comes after several notable Sunni politicians, including Mashhadani, called in December 2024 for a “comprehensive national dialogue” to address political and economic grievances.[26] The boycott also comes after Khanjar warned in December 2024 that Sunnis would turn to “other parties” that oppose dialogue and negotiation if the Iraqi federal government fails to defend them, suggesting that Sunni Iraqis remain frustrated by the federal government’s treatment of the Sunni community.[27]

**Syrian interim government officials met with senior Turkish defense officials in Ankara on January 15, likely to discuss military coordination as well as Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) and Turkish efforts to coerce the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to disarm.** Syrian interim Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani, interim Defense Minister Marhaf Abu Qasra, and interim Intelligence Chief Anas Khattab met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.[28] The Syrian officials also met with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Defense Minister Yasar Guler, and intelligence head Ibrahim Kalin.[29] A meeting between key defense and security stakeholders suggests that the parties likely discussed military coordination in northern Syria, where the Turkish aircraft and drones are supporting the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) against the SDF. CTP-ISW previously assessed that HTS and Turkey are coordinating to disarm and integrate the SDF into the HTS-led defense apparatus.[30] Turkish officials have repeatedly threatened to “destroy” the SDF in a military operation if it does not disarm. Turkey has directly supported SNA efforts to isolate and destroy SDF elements along the Euphrates River since at least late December 2024.[31] Turkish support efforts could also be a precursor to a Turkish operation into Syria. Shaibani

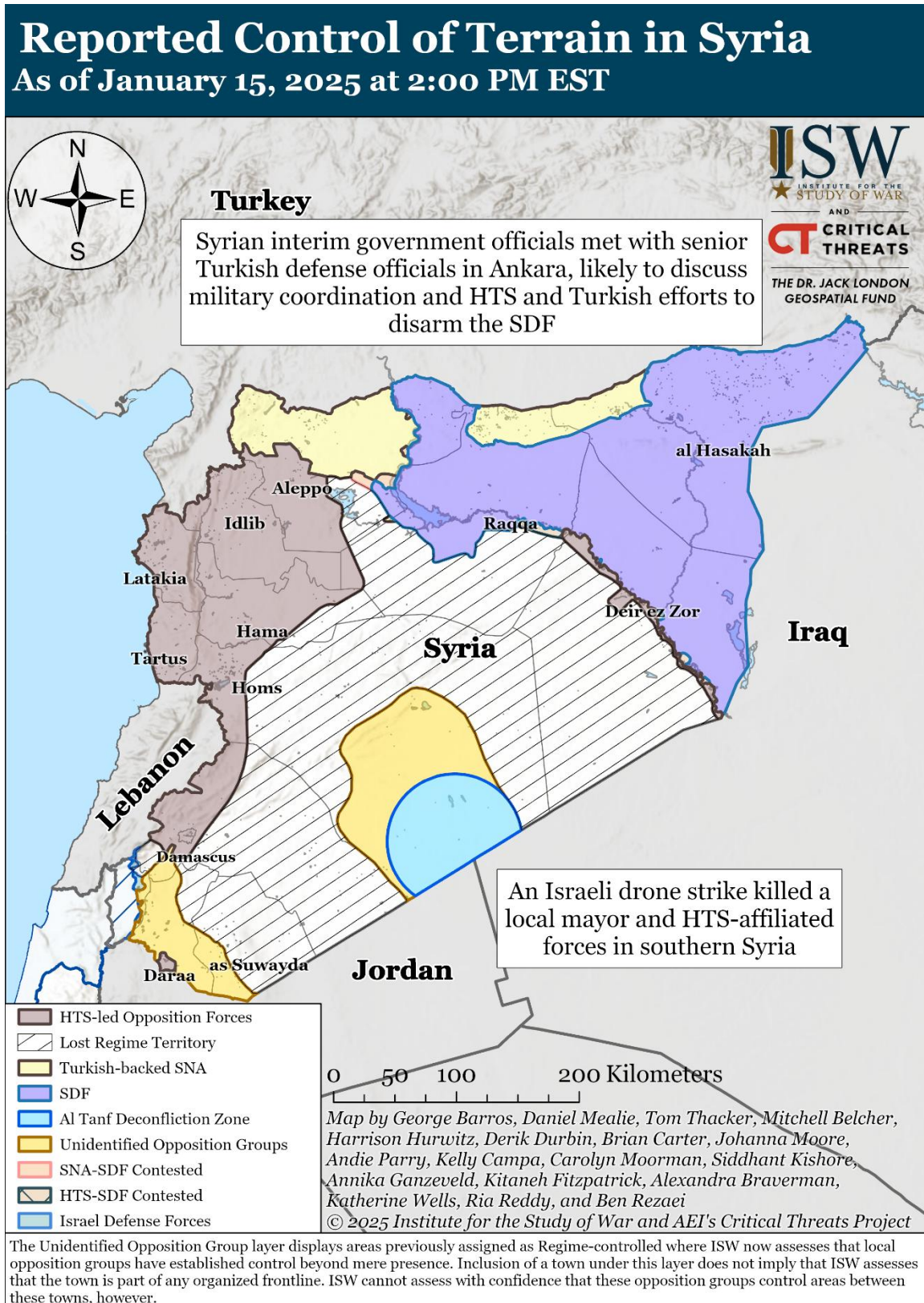
said during a press conference in Ankara that the HTS-led government will not allow Syrian territory to be used as a "launchpad" for actors to threaten Turkey, signaling HTS support for Turkey's effort to destroy the SDF.[32]

**The SDF has continued to push back against HTS demands for its disarmament and integration into the Syrian Defense Ministry.** The Syrian delegation in Ankara also likely briefed Turkish officials on the progress of their negotiations with the SDF. Fidan suggested on January 10 that Turkey would give the Syrian interim government an opportunity to disarm and dissolve the SDF before Turkey takes military action.[33] HTS and the SDF have not yet made tangible progress toward an agreement. SDF commander Mazloum Abdi said on January 14 that he and HTS leader Ahmed al Shara have not agreed on the terms of the SDF and Kurdish-controlled government's integration into the new Syrian military and political establishment but are in the process of forming a committee to discuss such issues.[34] Shaibani confirmed during a press conference in Ankara that Syrian officials are engaged in "dialogue and negotiation" with the SDF.[35] Abdi maintained that he seeks a "decentralized" administration and wants the SDF to integrate into the Syrian Defense Ministry as a "military bloc" rather than on an "individual" level.[36] Abdi likely calculates that maintaining some degree of Kurdish political and security autonomy would provide Kurds in northeastern Syria with better security guarantees than if the Kurdish-controlled government and SDF fully subordinated themselves to a centralized government. The ongoing Turkish and SNA attacks on the SDF have likely heightened Abdi's concerns about the need to retain political and security autonomy. HTS officials have maintained that they will not allow any "federal" entities in Syria, however, and are unlikely to capitulate on this demand.[37] Shaibani declared in Ankara that the HTS-led interim government cannot "accept" the SDF in its current form outside the central government.[38] Abdi also mentioned that the SDF would allow HTS to take control of the oil fields in SDF-held territory, provided that the profits of the oil fields are distributed "fairly." [39]

**Key Takeaways:**

- **Gaza Strip Ceasefire:** Israel and Hamas approved a ceasefire-hostage agreement on January 15. Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani announced that mediators from the United States, Qatar, and Egypt will monitor the ceasefire, which will take effect on January 19. Hamas appears to have agreed to allow the IDF to remain in the Philadelphi Corridor, an operationally and strategically significant IDF-held area in the southern Gaza Strip, during at least the first phase of the ceasefire.
- **Iraqi Parliamentary Politics:** A large number of Iraqi political parties boycotted parliament on January 15, likely to demonstrate their ability to rally sufficient support to block parliament. The Iraqi Parliament Speaker and his allies, including the United Sunni Leadership Coalition, may also have deliberately blocked the General Amnesty Law in order to block the passage of the Intelligence Service Law, which was also on the agenda.
- **Syria-Turkey Meeting:** Syrian interim government officials met with senior Turkish defense officials in Ankara on January 15, likely to discuss military coordination as well as Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) and Turkish efforts to coerce the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to disarm. The Syrian delegation in Ankara also likely briefed Turkish officials on the progress of

their negotiations with the SDF. The SDF has continued to push back against HTS demands for its disarmament and integration into the Syrian Defense Ministry.





## Syria

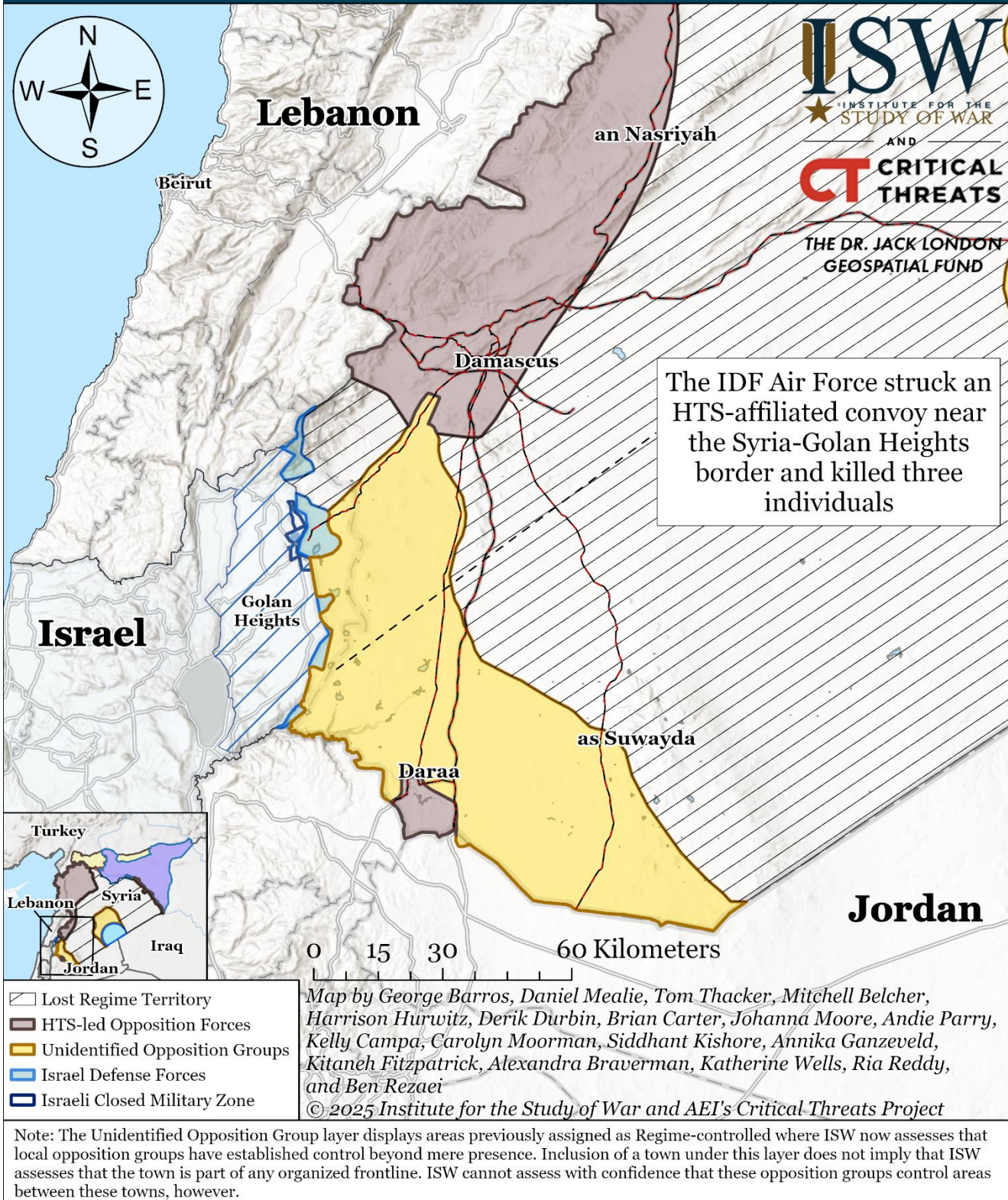
### **Axis of Resistance objectives:**

- Reestablish ground lines of communication through Syria to Lebanon
- Reestablish Iranian influence in Syria

**The IDF Air Force struck an HTS-affiliated convoy near the Syria-Golan Heights border on January 15.** Syrian sources reported that an Israeli drone struck and killed two Public Security Department members as they collected surrendered weapons in the town of Ghadir al Bustan.[40] The Israeli strike also killed the mayor of Ghadir al Bustan.[41] The IDF said that it launched “evasive fire” near vehicles “traveling near the buffer zone in southern Syria, carrying weapons and ammunition.”[42] An official HTS-led interim government source announced the security campaign in Ghadir al Bustan before the IDF drone strike.[43] The strike appears to be the first IDF strike that has directly targeted HTS-led government forces.[44] Israeli ground forces have previously collected weapons from towns near the Golan Heights.[45] The IDF Air Force conducted an air campaign to destroy Syrian weapons stockpiles after HTS overthrew the Assad regime in December 2024.[46] CTP-ISW last recorded an IDF Air Force strike in Syria on January 2.[47]

# Opposition Advances in Southwest Syria

As of January 15, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



**Turkish or Turkish-backed SNA air assets struck an Autonomous Administration of North East Syria (AANES)-organized civilian convoy as it traveled to the Tishreen Dam, east of Aleppo, on January 15.**<sup>[48]</sup> Turkish or Turkish-backed SNA air assets similarly struck a civilian convoy on January 8.<sup>[49]</sup> AANES, which is the governing authority in northeast Syria affiliated with the SDF, called on January 7 for civilians to travel to the Tishreen Dam and protest Turkish-backed military operations there.<sup>[50]</sup> The SDF and SNA have fought near the Tishreen Dam since mid-December 2024. Photo and video evidence from the site of the attack shows that at least two strikes targeted several cars in the convoy.<sup>[51]</sup> A Syrian source reported that the convoy included 900 people and that the strike killed at least three people.<sup>[52]</sup> The SDF said that Turkish "warplanes" conducted the strike.<sup>[53]</sup> The strikes targeted an SDF supply line to the SDF bridgehead at Tishreen Dam.<sup>[54]</sup> Turkey and the SNA are attempting to isolate SDF forces by striking supply lines and key nodes behind the front while pressuring the SDF bridgeheads with ground attacks.

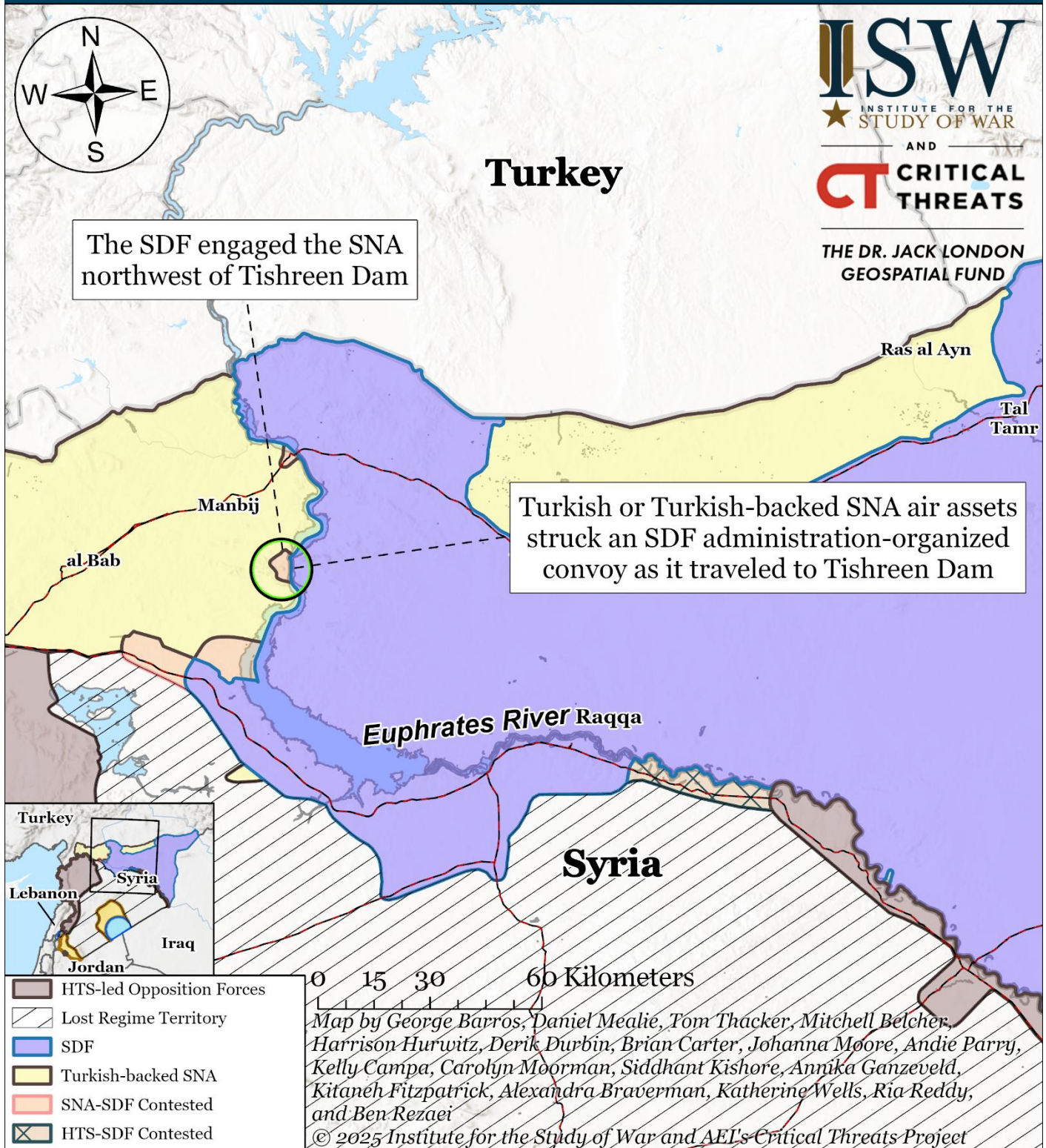
**The Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) continued to attack US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) positions along the line of control deep in SDF-held territory on January 15.** Anti-SDF media reported that the SNA shelled SDF positions in Abu Raseen, near the line of control north of Tal Tamr.<sup>[55]</sup> Anti-SDF media also reported that airstrikes targeted SDF positions around Tal Tamr.<sup>[56]</sup> The SNA and Turkey have recently shelled SDF positions around Tal Tamr. Turkish and SNA artillery fire coincided with reported SNA deployments to the line of control near Tal Tamr, which started on at least January 8.<sup>[57]</sup>

**The SNA and Turkey continued to pressure the SDF bridgehead west of Tishreen Dam.** Anti-SDF media reported that the SNA and the SDF fought west of the dam.<sup>[58]</sup> The SDF announced that six of its fighters died in engagements with SNA forces near the dam on January 15.<sup>[59]</sup> Anti-SDF media reported that Turkey conducted airstrikes that targeted SDF positions in tunnels and above ground around Tishreen Dam.<sup>[60]</sup>



# Control of Terrain in Northern Syria

As of January 15, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



**HTS continues to face locally organized resistance to its control in southern Syria.** A Military Operations Department officer told southern Syria-based media on January 15 that security forces have thwarted attempts to form new armed groups north of Daraa.[61] The officer said that the groups had looted former SAA barracks.[62] HTS-led forces arrested the individuals who sought to establish the armed groups and confiscated their weapons.[63] HTS has contended with and suppressed several small pockets of locally organized fighter cells in areas under its control, including in coastal Syria and along the Syria-Lebanon border. Local factions in southern Syria have maintained some autonomy for years through Russian-brokered “reconciliation” agreements with the Assad regime. Several recent incidents have tested HTS’s ability to suppress potential challenges to its control in the south, including recent skirmishes in Sanamayn and protests against HTS control over the Nassib crossing.[64] HTS has thus far successfully suppressed these incidents, but HTS forces have struggled to control local factions, including those affiliated with the Southern Operations Room. The Southern Operations Room has also so far refused to hand over its weapons or will not join the defense ministry unless HTS allows the Southern Operations Room to reflag. Local factions may attempt to continue to obtain weapons if HTS does not secure former SAA sites in the south. Locally organized opposition groups can arm themselves with relative ease if these weapons stockpiles remain accessible to the public.

**HTS-led security forces conducted several security operations that targeted former Bashar al Assad regime members across HTS-controlled territory in Syria on January 14 and 15.** HTS-led security forces detained an unspecified number of former Assad regime members in the Dummar neighborhood in northwestern Damascus on January 15. Most of the former regime members had not settled with the HTS-led interim government or surrendered their weapons.[65] HTS-led security forces also arrested several former (SAA) 25th Division members, including two commanders, and confiscated weapons in the Qahmana, Arz, Khattab, and Halfaya areas in Hama Province on January 15.[66] Syrian media reported that HTS-led security forces have resettled around 16,000 former SAA soldiers in Hama City since the fall of the Assad regime.[67] HTS-led security forces also targeting former Assad regime members and ISIS fighters in the Qaryatein, Mahin, and al Tifour areas in Homs Province.[68] HTS-led security forces announced on January 14 that they had seized a warehouse of mines and rocket shells in Umm Haratin during a security operation in western Homs Province.[69]

**US-led international coalition forces likely conducted an airstrike that targeted al Qaeda or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) fighters in northern Idlib Province.**[70] Syrian media reported that a coalition drone strike targeted two individuals on a motorcycle near Sarmada.[71] A pro-HTS Salafi said the strike killed former ISIS leader Mohammad al Dhaiban.[72]

## **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

See topline.

## 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

**The Houthis claimed that they conducted a cruise missile and drone attack targeting the USS *Harry S. Truman* aircraft carrier and its accompanying naval vessels in the northern Red Sea on January 15.[73]** This alleged attack marks the sixth time that the Houthis have claimed to attack the USS *Harry S. Truman* aircraft carrier since December 2024.[74]

## 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

### The Gaza Strip

**Geolocated footage posted on January 14 showed Israeli forces demolishing infrastructure in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip.[75]** Palestinian militias claimed that they targeted Israeli forces in two mortar and one improvised explosive device attacks around Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip on January 14 and 15.[76]

**The IDF Air Force struck approximately 50 Palestinian militia targets in the central and southern Gaza Strip overnight on January 14-15.[77]** The targets included Hamas cells, weapons depots, underground infrastructure, and anti-tank positions.[78] The IDF also struck a Palestinian militia headquarters in a former school complex.[79] The IDF said that Palestinian militias used the school complex to attack Israeli forces.[80]

**The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson issued evacuation orders for areas in the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip after Palestinian fighters fired rockets at Israel from the area.[81]** The IDF instructed Gazans to immediately evacuate to IDF-declared humanitarian shelters in Gaza City.

# Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip

## As of January 15, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



CTP-ISW's "Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones" layer shows Israeli evacuation zones announced by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). CTP-ISW used IDF maps and statements to create this layer. Where IDF maps cover part of a zone this layer covers the whole zone to avoid understating the evacuation order. The IDF began announcing these evacuation zones on December 2, 2023, at 0222 ET on X (Twitter)

The IDF issued evacuation orders for areas in Jabalia refugee camp after Palestinian fighters fired rockets from the area



- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations\*
- Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
- Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones
- Newly Announced Evacuation Zones as of January 15
- IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza
- Netzarim Corridor
- Philadelphi Corridor

0 2.5 5 10 Kilometers

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, Derik Durbin, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, and Ben Rezaei  
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\* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete



## Lebanon

**Hezbollah-affiliated media reported that Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) bulldozers and forces advanced toward Aitaroun, southeastern Lebanon, on January 15 to open a road that the IDF reportedly closed on January 14.[82]** Lebanese media reported on January 14 that Israeli forces and tanks built earth mounds and detonated explosives in Aitaroun.[83] Hezbollah-affiliated media reported on January 15 that the LAF positioned forces west of Aitaroun because IDF operations closed the entrance to the town.[84]

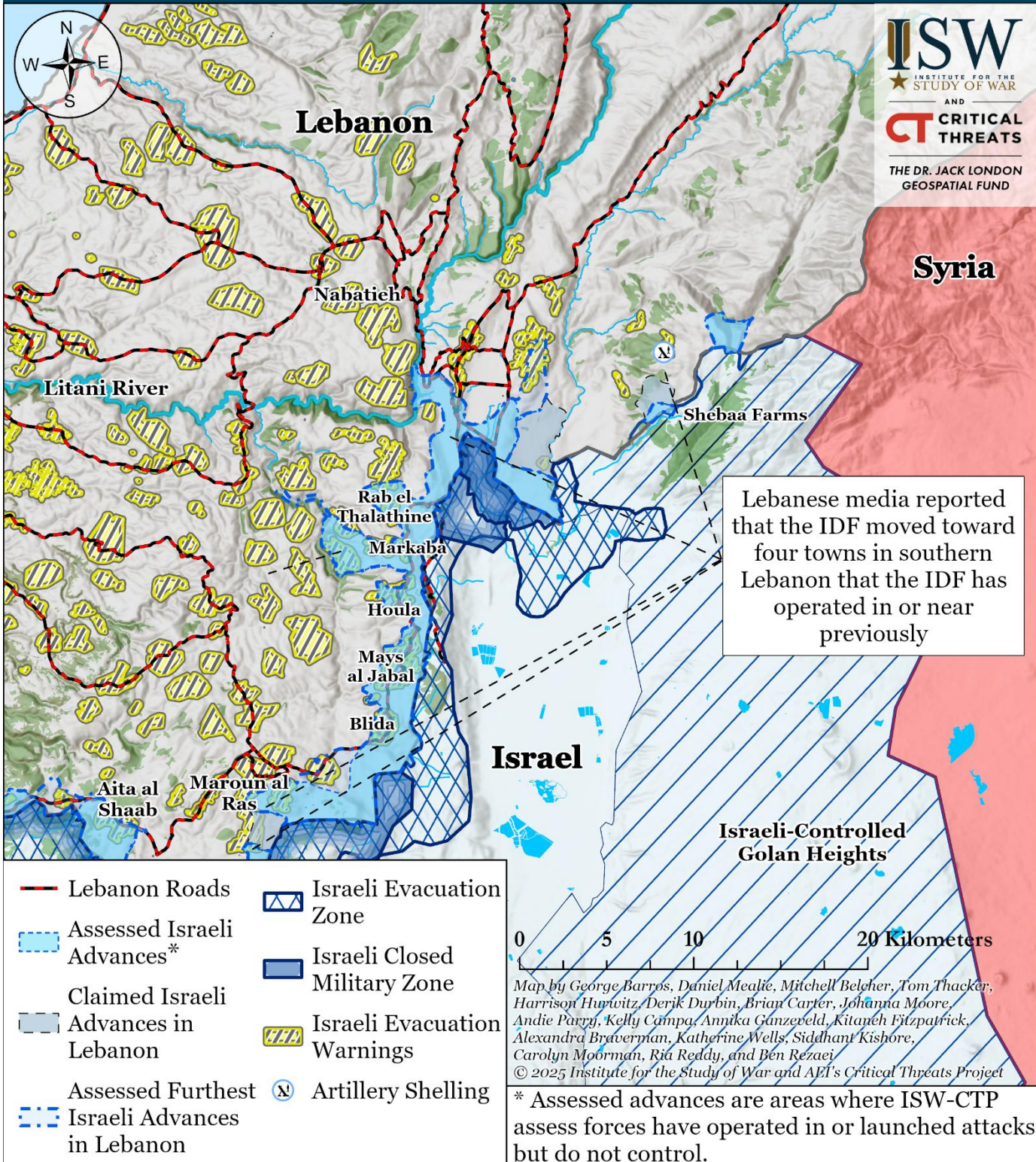
**UNIFIL and the LAF cleared three unspecified “major obstacles” near Khiam on January 12.[85]** The LAF and UNIFIL backfilled the IDF 7th Armored Brigade in Khiam in December 2024.[86]

**Hezbollah-affiliated and Lebanese media reported on January 15 that the IDF moved toward four towns in southern Lebanon that the IDF had previously operated in or near.** Hezbollah-affiliated media reported that Israeli vehicles advanced toward Maroun al Ras, southwestern Lebanon.[87] Lebanese media separately reported that Israeli forces advanced toward Kfar Kila, Kfarchouba, and the Dora neighborhood of Yaroun in southeastern Lebanon.[88] Lebanese media reported that 25 Israeli vehicles advanced from Metula, Israel, toward Kfar Kila and stopped in Tal al Nahas.[89] Hezbollah-affiliated media separately reported on January 15 that IDF artillery shelled the Burj Matlin area, north of Kfarchouba.[90]

**Lebanese and Hezbollah-affiliated media reported on January 15 that Israeli forces conducted separate search operations in Hula and Khiam, Marjaayoun Province.[91]** Israeli forces have operated in the area since late October 2024.[92]

**Lebanese and Hezbollah-affiliated media reported on January 15 that Israeli forces detonated explosives in Aita al Shaab and Yaroun, Bint Jbeil Province.[93]** Lebanese and Hezbollah-affiliated media also reported that Israeli forces and vehicles bulldozed unspecified infrastructure in Yaroun.[94]

# Reported Israeli Operations in the Eastern Sector As of January 15, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST





**US Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General Michael Kurilla discussed security cooperation and the Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire with senior IDF leadership in Israel between January 13 and 15.**[95] Kurilla discussed US-Israel security cooperation and threats to regional stability with IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi and IDF Air Force Commander Major General Tomer Bar. Kurilla and Halevi discussed the implementation and monitoring of the Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire. Kurilla met with newly-elected Lebanese President Joseph Aoun on January 13.[96]

### West Bank

**The IDF Air Force conducted an airstrike that targeted Palestinian militia fighters in Jenin on January 14.**[97] Israeli media reported that the strike killed at least six fighters, including a likely senior Hamas member."[98] Hamas mourned the death of one of its commanders and four fighters on January 15, both of whom the IDF killed in Jenin refugee camp.[99]

**The IDF Air Force conducted a separate airstrike in Jenin on January 15.**[100] The Palestinian Health Ministry reported that the strike killed at least five Palestinians.[101] The IDF has not provided further details about the strike at the time of this writing.

**Palestinian Islamic Jihad's (PIJ) Jenin Battalion and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades targeted Israeli vehicles in Qabatiya, Jenin Governorate, with improvised explosive devices (IED) and small arms on January 14.**[102] The IDF reported on January 14 that two Israeli soldiers sustained serious injuries after an IDF vehicle ran over an IED in Qabatiya.[103]

### Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

**The Iranian Artesh Navy unveiled its first intelligence and signals destroyer, Zagros, during a ceremony in Konarak, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, on January 15.**[104] Artesh Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani described the destroyer as the Artesh Navy's "vigilant eye" in strategic waters such as the Indian, Pacific, and Atlantic oceans. [105] Iranian media claimed that the Zagros destroyer possesses advanced technologies in electromagnetism, electronics, and cyber warfare.[106]

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