Iran Update

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June 29, 2024, 2:00 pm 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. Click here to subscribe to the Iran Update.

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.

No candidate received the majority of votes needed to win the Iranian presidential election on June 28.[1] Iran will hold a runoff election between the two most popular candidates—ultraconservative Saeed Jalili and reformist Masoud Pezeshkian—on July 5.[2] Jalili will likely win the runoff vote and become the next Iranian president. The Iranian regime reported that Pezeshkian received the most votes at around 10.4 million, while Jalili received around 9.5 million.[3] Jalili will likely receive significantly more votes in the runoff election since there will be no other hardline candidates splitting the hardline vote. The second most prominent hardline candidate—Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf—received around 3.4 million votes, which was not enough to compete in the runoff election. At least some Ghalibaf voters will presumably back Jalili in the runoff election, giving him a significant advantage over Pezeshkian.

Jalili would run an ultraconservative hardline government similar to late-President Ebrahim Raisi. Such a president would likely exacerbate the economic and socio-cultural issues frustrating large swaths of the Iranian population. Jalili is a deeply ideological regime loyalist who has long supported extreme domestic and foreign policies. Western and Iranian opposition outlets reported that some Iranian hardliners, including senior officers from the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, tried to prevent Jalili from running for president, feeling that his views are too radical.[4] Jalili downplayed the importance of external engagement to improve the Iranian economy during the presidential debates, suggesting that he might instead favor an autarkic agenda.[5] Jalili also voiced support for Iran's "nuclear rights" and criticized the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in the debates.[6] These comments are particularly concerning given that Iran has in recent months expanded its nuclear program significantly and begun running computer simulations that could help build a nuclear weapon.

The presidential election on June 28 saw unprecedently low voter turnout, highlighting widespread disillusionment with the Iranian regime. The Iranian Interior Ministry announced that around 25.5 million votes were cast, which is around 40 percent of the Iranian electorate.[7] Notwithstanding the possibility that the regime inflated these numbers, they reflect a notable drop-off from the roughly 48.5-percent turnout for the Iranian presidential election in 2021.[8]

Key Takeaways:
- **Iran:** No candidate received the majority of votes needed to win the Iranian presidential election. Iran will hold a runoff vote on July 5. Hardliner Saeed Jalili will likely win the runoff vote and become the next Iranian president.
- **Gaza Strip:** The IDF 98th Division continued raids in Shujaiya, Gaza City. An Israeli military correspondent reported that Hamas' Shujaiya Battalion reconstituted after previous Israeli raids by recruiting new fighters and fighters who fled to Shujaiya from other parts of the strip.
- **Gaza Strip:** The United States has proposed new language for the US-backed Israel-Hamas ceasefire agreement, according to three unspecified informed sources cited by Axios.
- **Yemen:** The Houthis and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed a combined drone attack targeting a commercial vessel in the Mediterranean Sea. This attack marks the sixth time that the Houthis have claimed a combined operation targeting Israel with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq.

Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War
As of June 29, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET

An Israeli military correspondent confirmed Hamas began reconstituting its battalion in Shujaiya after Israeli forces left the area in April 2024

Lebanese Hezbollah conducted six attacks into northern Israel

Israeli forces engaged Palestinian fighters in two locations in the West Bank

No candidate got the votes needed to win the Iranian presidential election. Iran will hold a runoff vote, which hardliner Saeed Jalili will likely win.

Lebanon

Syria

Haifa

Nof Hagalil

Netanya

Nablus

West Bank

Tel Aviv

Ramla

Ramallah

Ashdod

Jerusalem

Gaza

Beer Sheva

Egypt

Israel

Jordan

0 50 100 200 Kilometers

Gaza Strip and West Bank   Golan Heights

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Tom Thacker, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, and Alexandra Braverman
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Gaza Strip

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

The IDF 98th Division continued raids in Shujaiya, Gaza City, on June 29. The IDF Paratrooper Brigade destroyed militia infrastructure, identified underground tunnels, and located weapons caches.[9] The IDF 7th Brigade raided a school that Hamas allegedly used as a compound and located a cache of weapons, including drones and long-range rocket launchers.[10] The IDF Air Force conducted airstrikes targeting fighters in Shujaiya, including a Palestinian militia cell preparing to
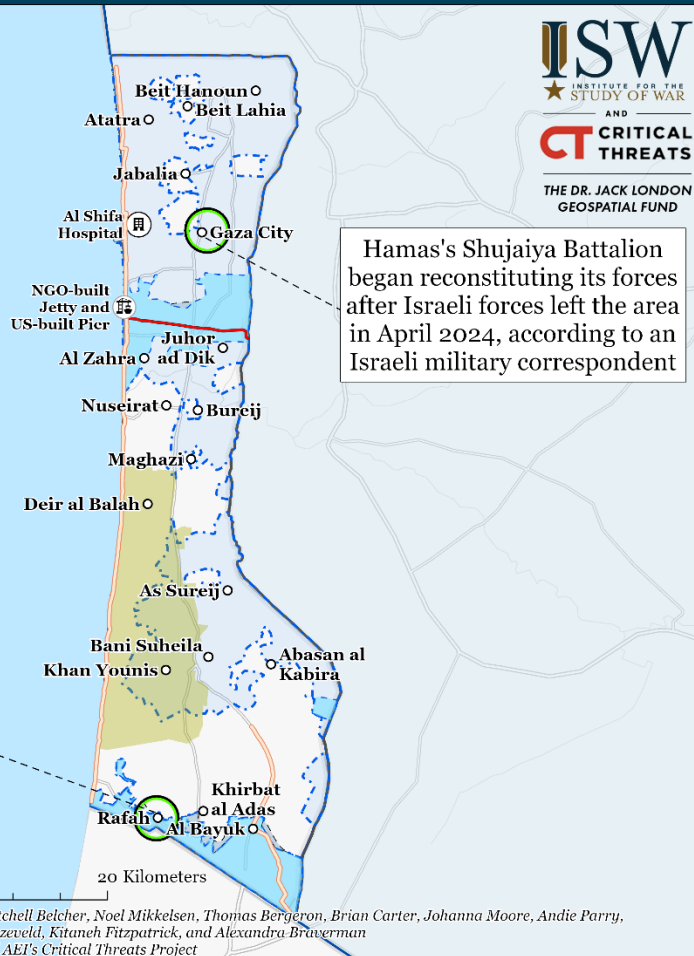
attack Israeli forces.[11] Israeli forces killed 40 Palestinian fighters during the operation.[12] An Israeli military correspondent reported that the purpose of the IDF raid into Shujaiya is to locate and destroy underground tunnels and militia infrastructure.[13]

An Israeli military correspondent reported that Hamas' Shujaiya Battalion reconstituted after previous Israeli raids by recruiting new fighters and fighters who fled to Shujaiya from other parts of the strip.[14] CTP-ISW previously observed that Hamas cells have probably established a rear area in Jabalia and/or northern Shujaiya, from which they can mount attacks on IDF units along the Israel-Gaza Strip border.[15] Hamas continues to exploit the IDF raid-based model to preserve its forces and enable follow-on reconstitution efforts.[16] The military correspondent noted that the fighting during the current operation in Shujaiya is not as "intense" as the fighting in Jabalia during the May 2024 re-clearing operation.[17] Hamas, PIJ, and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed multiple mortar attacks targeting Israeli personnel, vehicles, and combat outposts.[18] PIJ and the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement targeted IDF armor with rocket propelled grenades (RPG).[19] Hamas fighters detonated a planted improvised explosive device (IED) targeting Israeli forces.[20]

Israeli forces continued clearing operations throughout the Gaza Strip on June 29. The IDF Nahal Brigade and Givati Brigade (162nd Division) killed Palestinian fighters and raided militia buildings and tunnels in Rafah.[21] The IDF Air Force supported clearing operations and destroyed Palestinian militia infrastructure targets. The IDF 99th Division engaged Palestinian fighters during clearing operations along the Netzarim corridor and directed airstrikes on fighters nearby.[22] Palestinian and Hamas media reports cited by Reuters claimed that Israeli forces have advanced west into Shakoush neighborhood.[23] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades launched rockets and mortars targeting Israeli forces in central Rafah.[24]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip
As of June 29, 2024, 2:00 PM ET

Hamas's Shujaiya Battalion began reconstituting its forces after Israeli forces left the area in April 2024, according to an Israeli military correspondent

Israeli forces engaged Palestinian fighters in several sectors of Rafah

Beit Hanoun
Beit Lahia
Atatra
Jabalia
Al Shifa Hospital
Gaza City
NGO-built Jetty and US-built Pier
Juhor ad Dik
Al Zahra
Nuseirat
Bureij
Maghazi
Deir al Balah
As Sureij
Bani Suheila
Khan Younis
Abasan al Kabira
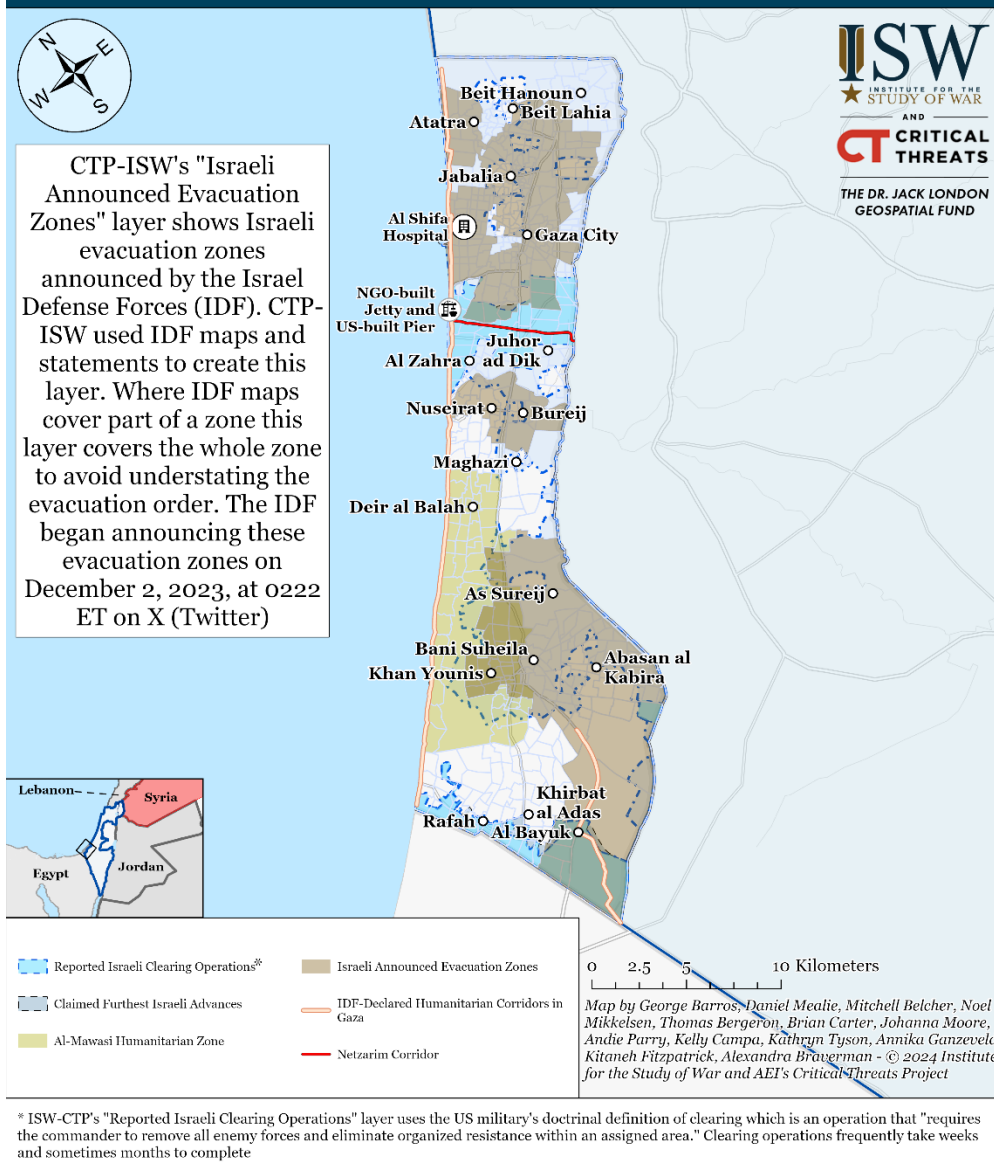Khirbat al Adas
Rafah
Al Bayuk

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, and Alexandra Braverman
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Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
Assessed Furthest Extent of Israeli Clearing Operations
IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza
Netzarim Corridor
Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone

Lebanon   Syria
Egypt   Jordan

* 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

Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip
As of June 29, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET

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)

Legend:
- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
- Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
- Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones
- IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza
- Netzarim Corridor

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

* 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

CENTCOM will temporarily move the floating humanitarian aid pier south of Gaza City to Ashdod, Israel, due to poor weather conditions.[25]

The United States has proposed new language for the US-backed Israel-Hamas ceasefire agreement, according to three unspecified informed sources cited by Axios on June 28.[26] The proposed language focuses on Article 8 of the ceasefire proposal, which delineates negotiations between Israel and Hamas during phase one to reach a "sustained calm." Hamas has called for the negotiations during phase one to only address the number and identity of Palestinian prisoners to be released in exchange for Israeli hostages. Israel wants to include discussions on the demilitarization of the Gaza Strip and other unspecified issues. It is unclear what exact changes have been made.

West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:
- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Israeli forces engaged Palestinian fighters in at least two locations since CTP-ISW's data cut-off on June 28.[27]
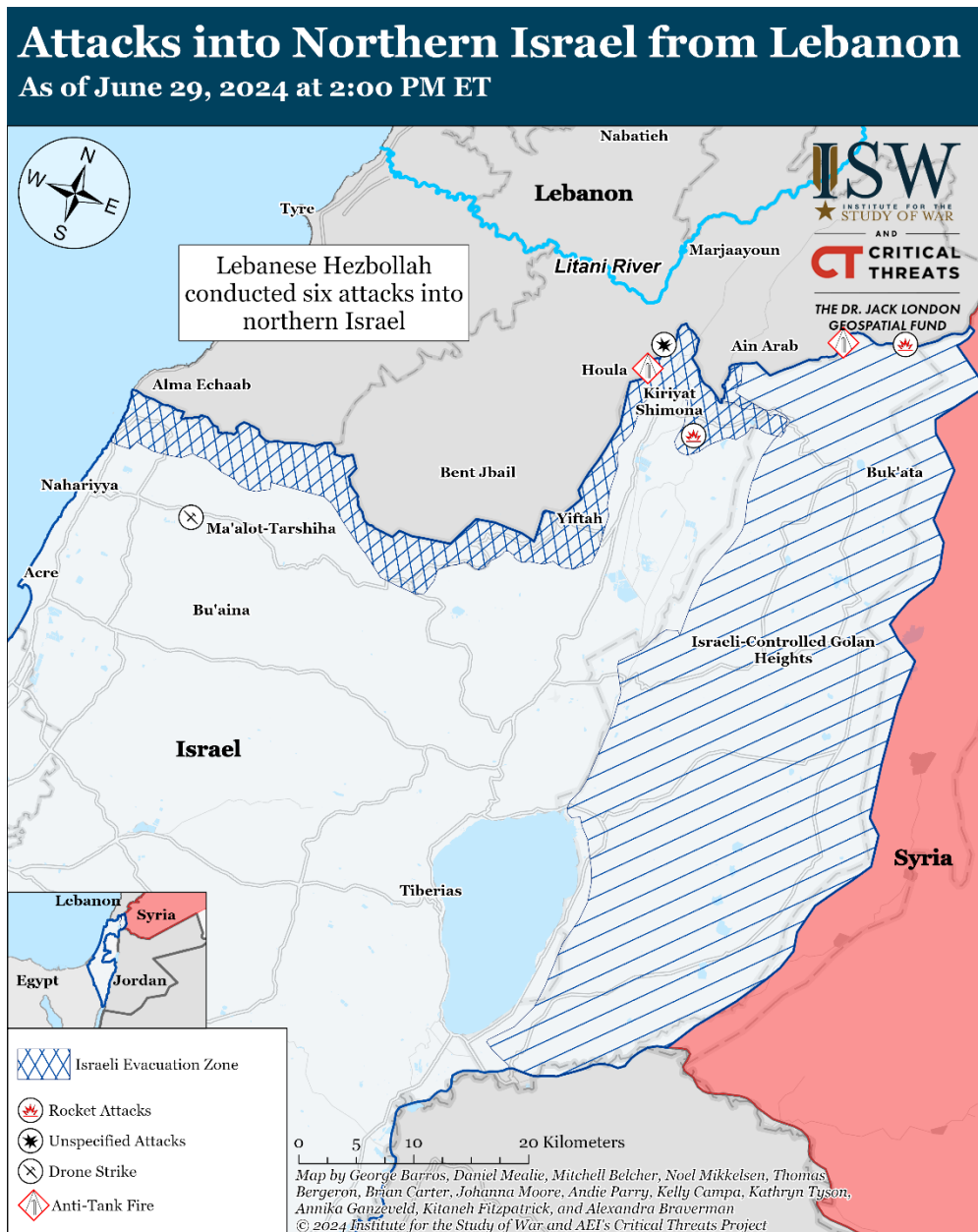

This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

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 conducted at least six attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's data cut off on June 28.[28]

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

Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2024

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Hardline Iranian politician Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf endorsed candidate Saeed Jalili on June 29 for the runoff Iranian presidential election.[29] Ghalibaf received the third highest number of votes in the initial president election on June 28.[30] Ghalibaf is therefore ineligible for the runoff election. Former IRGC Commander Mohsen Rezaei similarly endorsed Saeed Jalili for the runoff election in a statement on X (Twitter) on June 29.[31]

Acting Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Bagheri Kani discussed the situation between Israel and Hezbollah in a phone call with Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov on June 28.[32] Bagheri Kani emphasized the readiness of Hezbollah in the event of a war with Israel. Bagheri Kani stated that the crisis could expand to other areas of the Middle East. Lavrov stated that Russia wants to prevent a war between Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah. Lavrov emphasized the responsibility of all parties involved to de-escalate tensions.

The Houthis and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed a combined drone attack on June 28 targeting a commercial vessel in the Mediterranean Sea.[33] The Houthi military spokesperson and Islamic Resistance in Iraq issued separate but complimentary statements claiming to target the Panamanian-flagged tanker *Waler* in the Mediterranean Sea.[34] This attack marks the sixth time that the Houthis have claimed a combined operation targeting Israel with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq since June 6.[35] Houthi spokesperson Brigadier General Yahya Sarea stated that the *Waler* was traveling to Haifa, which has been the most frequent target for the Houthi and Iraqi groups' combined attacks.[36] The IDF has not acknowledged any such attack, and CTP-ISW cannot verify the claim at the time of this writing.

The Houthis claimed on June 28 three attacks targeting vessels in the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea.[37] Houthi spokesperson Brigadier General Yahya Sarea stated that the Houthis fired a cruise missile targeting the *Johannes Maersk* in the Mediterranean Sea. Sarea also stated that the Houthis launched unmanned surface vessels (USVs) targeting the vessel *Ioannis* and fired ballistic missiles targeting the Liberian-flagged tanker *Delonix* in the Red Sea.

US CENTCOM reported on June 28 that it destroyed seven Houthi drones and a ground-control station in Houthi-controlled Yemen.[38]

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Ex%2Dchief%20of&text=A%20former%20Iranian%20Revolutionary%20Guard,moderates%20out%20of%20the%20election. ; https://iranwire dot com/en/politics/129720-exclusive-iranian-conservatives-rally-against-saeed-jalilis-potential-presidency/

[5] https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1403/04/01/3108271

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[8] https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/04/middleeast/iran-low-turnout-election-intl/index.html

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[19] https://t.me/sarayaps/18203; https://t.me/mojahdeenpal/4624;

[20] https://t.me/qassam1brigades/2558

[21] https://x.com/idfonline/status/1806938441688502590

[22] https://x.com/idfonline/status/1806938441688502590

[23] https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-forces-push-deeper-into-southern-northern-gaza-2024-06-28/

[24] https://t.me/nedalps/4227

[25] https://x.com/CENTCOM/status/1806849292574892284

[26] https://www.axios.com/2024/06/29/us-israel-hamas-gaza-hostage-ceasefire-deal-language

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