



Iran Update, May 30, 2024

Ashka Jhaveri, Alexandra Braverman, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Kelly Campa, Johanna Moore, and Nicholas Carl

Information Cutoff: 2:00pm ET

Israel withdrew some IDF units from Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on May 30, according to local Palestinian sources.[1] The local authorities from Hamas' Emergency Committee told displaced Palestinian civilians to avoid returning to Jabalia at this time because "there are still dangerous remnants."[2] A local Palestinian journalist said that Israeli forces remain in the northern and eastern parts of Jabalia.[3] The IDF confirmed on May 30 that at least one of the three brigades that were in Jabalia is still there.[4] Palestinian militias claimed several attacks targeting Israeli forces in and around Jabalia, further indicating that Israeli forces are still in the area.[5]

The partial Israeli withdrawal from Jabalia follows some of the most intense fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters during the war. The IDF reentered Jabalia on May 11 after assessing that Hamas and other Palestinian militias were rebuilding their capabilities and networks there.[6] Hamas was able to do so despite the IDF killing Hamas' local battalion commander there in October 2023.[7] The IDF assessed two weeks into the Jabalia operation that three Hamas battalions are active there rather than just one.[8] Palestinian militias conducted an unusually high rate of attacks targeting Israeli forces in Jabalia during this period. IDF officers described the fighting there as some of the most intense of the war.[9]

Hamas and other Palestinian militias will almost certainly resume their efforts to reconstitute in Jabalia as Israeli forces withdraw. There are remaining pockets around Jabalia that Israeli forces have not cleared.[10] Hamas and other militias have probably moved into some of these areas to preserve their forces.[11] Hamas will capitalize on these remaining forces to rebuild their capabilities and networks in and around Jabalia as Israeli forces leave. US and Israeli officials have expressed concerns that Hamas will survive in the Gaza Strip without a post-war plan that involves an alternative to Hamas rule.[12]

The registration period for the Iranian presidential election began on May 30.[13] Only one prominent individual, hardliner Saeed Jalili, has registered thus far. Presidential candidates have until June 3 to register, after which the Guardian Council will vet and approve candidates. The Guardian Council has historically disqualified moderate and reformist figures during this period in order to advantage hardliners in the race.

The following individuals have registered thus far:

- **Saeed Jalili.** Jalili is a prominent hardliner, who serves as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's representative to the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC).[14] Jalili previously served as the SNSC secretary from 2007 to 2013.[15] Jalili is also a member of Iran's Expediency Discernment Council (EDC) and Strategic Foreign Relations Council, both of which are advisory boards to the supreme leader.[16] An Iranian opposition outlet reported on May 21 that elements in the regime tried to convince Khamenei to prevent Jalili from competing in the election.[17] These elements include some moderates, such as Ali Larijani, as well as several hardliners, such as EDC Chairman Sadegh Amoli Larijani, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, and former SNSC Secretary Ali Shamkhani.[18]
- **Mohammad Reza Sabaghian Bafghi.** Bafghi represents Bafgh, Yazd Province, in Parliament and is a member of the Parliamentary Internal Affairs Committee.[19] Bafghi previously headed the passive defense office in Yazd Province.[20]

- **Mostafa Kavakebian.** Kavakebian is a reformist candidate, who previously served as a representative for Tehran in Parliament.[21] The Guardian Council disqualified Kavakebian in the 2005, 2013, 2017, and 2021 presidential elections.[22] Kavakebian stated on May 30 that he would facilitate the removal of all international sanctions on Iran and establish relations with all countries except Israel if he becomes president.[23]
- Abbas Moghtadaei. Moghtadaei is a hardline candidate, who represents Esfahan City, Esfahan Province, in Parliament and previously served as the deputy chairman of the Parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.[24] Moghtadaei is a faculty member at the Islamic Azad University.[25]
- **Ghodrat Ali Hashemtian.** Hashemtian registered for the 2017 presidential election but later withdrew his candidacy.[26]

Syrian President Bashar al Assad traveled to Tehran to meet with senior Iranian officials on May 30. The visit may be part of recent efforts by Iran and its so-called "Axis of Resistance" to coordinate their actions vis-a-vis the Israel-Hamas war.[27] Assad met with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Interim President Mohammad Mokhber, Acting Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Bagheri Kani, and Roads and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash, among other Iranian officials.[28] The presence of Bazrpash, who also heads the Iran-Syria Joint Economic Commission, indicates that Assad discussed Iranian investment and reconstruction projects in Syria in at least some of the meetings.[29]

Assad's visit comes shortly after the Axis of Resistance held a meeting of its Joint Operations Room in Tehran on May 23.[30] The operations room is meant to align and coordinate Iranian and Iranian-backed campaigns against the United States and Israel. The May 23 meeting included senior officials from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), Lebanese Hezbollah, the Houthis, and several Iraqi and Palestinian militias, such as Hamas.

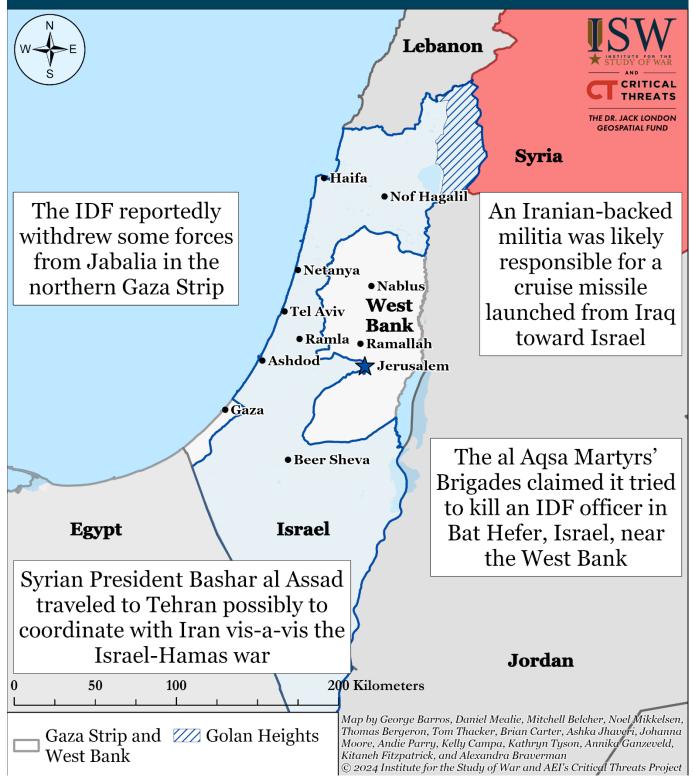
The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed that its fighters entered Bat Hefer in Israel to kill an IDF officer there on May 29.[31] The militia said that its fighters entered the officer's home and seized weapons but left once they realized that children were present.[32] CTP-ISW cannot verify this claim, as Israel has not confirmed that there was any militia activity around Bat Hefer at the time of this writing. The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades also threatened to attack Israeli civilians in the same way that Hamas did in October 2023.

The claimed infiltration into Bat Hefer comes amid an uptick in activity around Bat Hefer, which is near the Israel-West Bank border and immediately adjacent to Tulkarm, in recent days. Hamas fighters fired small arms from the West Bank targeting Bat Hefer on May 27 and May 29.[33] Around 30 unarmed Palestinians separately tried to cross the border from the West Bank into Bat Hefer on May 27. The IDF said on May 30 that it is increasing operations in the area in response to attacks targeting Bat Hefer.[34]

Key Takeaways:

- **Gaza Strip:** Israel reportedly withdrew some IDF units from Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip. Hamas will almost certainly try to exploit these withdrawals to continue reconstituting its forces.
- **Iran:** The registration period for the Iranian presidential election began. One only prominent individual, hardliner Saeed Jalili, has registered thus far. The registration period lasts until June 3.
- **Syria:** Syrian President Bashar al Assad traveled to Tehran to meet with senior Iranian officials. The visit may be part of recent efforts by Iran and its so-called "Axis of Resistance" to coordinate their actions vis-a-vis the Israel Hamas war.
- West Bank: The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed that its fighters entered Bat Hefer in Israel to kill an IDF officer there. The claim comes amid an uptick in activity around the Israel-West Bank border, specifically around Bat Hefer.

Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War As of May 30, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



<u>Gaza Strip</u> 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

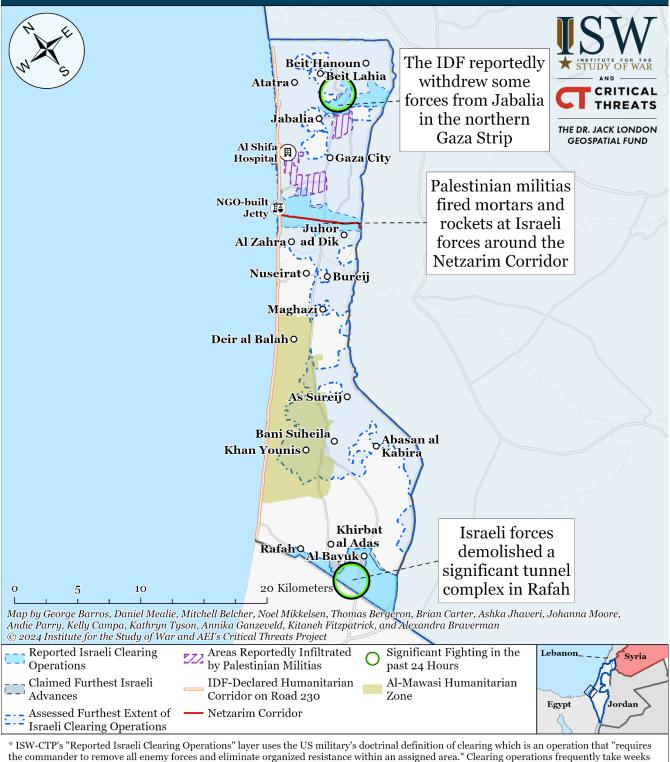
The IDF 99th Division continued operations along the Netzarim Corridor in the northern Gaza Strip on May 30.[35] Israeli forces located a Palestinian militia weapons depot in the area.[36] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades mortared an IDF site and fired rockets at Israeli forces along the corridor.[37]

Israeli forces continued clearing operations in Rafah on May 30.[38] The IDF Givati Brigade directed an airstrike targeting three Palestinian fighters. The IDF Nahal Brigade and 12th Brigade located Palestinian militia weapons depots in the area. Palestinian militias claimed several attacks targeting Israeli forces in western and southern Rafah.[39]

The IDF said on May 29 that it located and demolished a "significant" tunnel complex in Rafah.[40] The tunnel has a shaft located around 100 meters from the Rafah crossing around the Egypt-Gaza Strip border.[41] The tunnel does not cross into Egypt, however.[42] The IDF said that Hamas used the tunnel to support attacks targeting Israeli forces. Israeli forces located weapons inside the tunnel network, which branched into several paths at different depths. The *Wall Street Journal* published a map in October 2023 of the tunnel system that Hamas has created below the Gaza Strip based on data from 2014, which did not include any tunnels in Rafah.[43] Israel has idedantified nearly 700 tunnel shafts in Rafah and discovered about 20 that cross into Egypt since the IDF advanced into Rafah on May 7.[44]

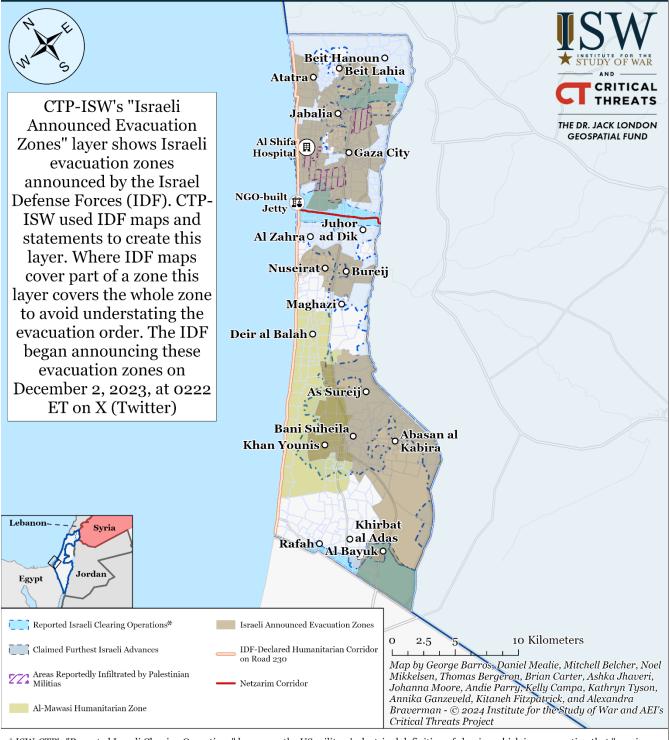
The IDF said on May 29 that Israel does not believe that Hamas moved Israeli hostages to Egypt via the tunnels.[45] The Israeli representative to the UN International Court of Justice said on May 17 that Hamas uses the tunnels connected to Egypt to smuggle weapons and that Hamas could use the tunnels to smuggle hostages or senior Hamas officials out of the Gaza Strip.[46]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip As of May 30, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



and sometimes months to complete

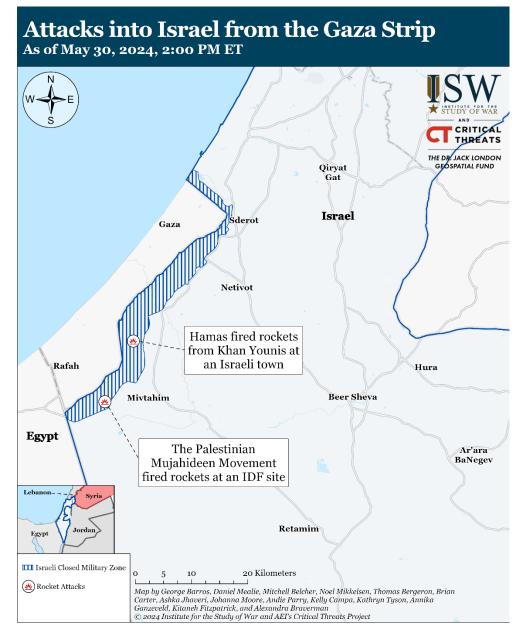
Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip As of May 30, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



* 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 **US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin discussed Israeli military activity in Rafah in a phone call with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on May 30.[47]** Gallant emphasized the importance of Israeli operations in Rafah, noting that Israel has "concrete information" that Hamas is holding hostages there. Austin and Gallant discussed the need to sustain the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip and the importance of opening the Rafah border crossing for aid flow.[48]

The United Nations said on May 29 that humanitarian aid entering the Gaza Strip has dropped 67 percent since Israeli forces advanced into Rafah on May 7.[49] Israeli forces took control of the Gazan side of the Rafah border crossing on May 7. Aid is currently entering the Gaza Strip from the Kerem Shalom crossing and a crossing west of Erez in the northern Gaza Strip.[50]

Palestinian fighters conducted two indirect fire attacks into Israel on May 30.[51] Hamas fired rockets from Khan Younis targeting an Israeli town.[52] The IDF last detected rocket fire from Khan Younis on April 8.[53]



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

<u>West Bank</u> Axis of Resistance objectives:

• Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

A Palestinian fighter killed two IDF soldiers in a car-ramming attack at a military checkpoint near Nablus on May 29.[54] The attacker later turned himself into the Palestinian Authority security forces.[55] The IDF reported that the Israeli soldiers belonged to the Kfir Brigade.[56] Hamas and the Mujahideen Movement praised the attack and called on Palestinian fighters and "youth" in the West Bank to escalate attacks targeting Israeli forces.[57]

Israeli forces have engaged Palestinian fighters in at least nine locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cut off on May 29.[58] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fired small arms and detonated IEDs targeting Israeli forces in Nablus and Tulkarm.[59] Israeli forces engaged PIJ and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in multiple locations in Jenin.[60]



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

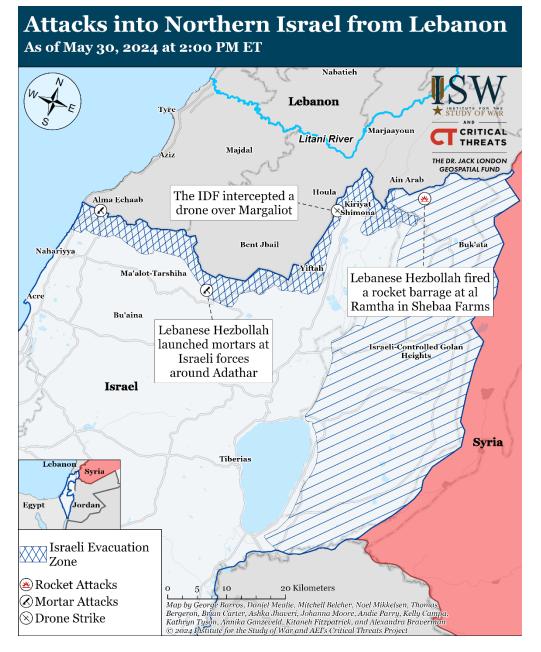
Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

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 five attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on May 29.[61] The IDF intercepted a drone launched from Lebanon over Margaliot on May 30.[62]

An Iranian-backed militia was likely responsible for a cruise missile launched from Iraq toward Israel on May 30.[63] The IDF intercepted the missile over the southern Golan Heights. No militia has claimed responsibility for the attack at the time of this writing.



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

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Unidentified individuals have attacked four US and UK businesses in Baghdad since May 26.[64] The individuals targeted Caterpillar Inc., the Cambridge Institute, and two Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) locations. Local reports suggest that the individuals threw IEDs at the businesses in some of the attacks.[65] The head of the Iraqi State of Law Coalition, Saad Muttalabi, suggested that the assailants attacked US and UK businesses due to the United States and United Kingdom supporting Israel.[66] Muttalabi suggested that the attacks are part of a larger boycott of companies that support Israel. He also argued that Israeli activity in the Gaza Strip and West Bank is the main driver of the attacks. Muttalabi added that the United States should not expect Iraqi security forces to protect every US business in Iraq.

US Ambassador to Iraq Alina Romanowski called on the Iraqi federal government to investigate the attacks on US and UK businesses in Baghdad.[67] Romanowski warned that the attacks threaten Iraqi lives and property and could discourage foreign investment in Iraq.

Israel was likely responsible for airstrikes targeting military transport vehicles in Homs, Syria, and a residential building in Tartous, Syria, on May 29. The Syrian Defense Ministry reported that Israel conducted an airstrike targeting a site "in the central region" and a residential building in Baniyas city, Tartous.[68] Syrian media reported that at least one of the airstrikes targeted transport vehicles in al Furqlus, Homs Province.[69] Syrian media also reported that the strike killed three Syrian Arab Army soldiers.[70] The IDF Air Force has previously targeted vehicles suspected of transporting Lebanese Hezbollah military cargo in Homs Province.[71] CTP-ISW cannot verify the local reporting.

Syrian media reported that the other airstrike targeted a residential building in Baniyas city, Tartous.[72] There was at least one civilian casualty, according to local reports.[73] Israel last conducted an airstrike targeting an IRGC Navy officer in Baniyas, Tartous, in March 2024.[74] The IDF has conducted an air campaign into Syria since December 2023 to disrupt the Iranian and Iranian-backed efforts to transfer of military materiel to Lebanon and Syria.[75]

Iraqi Interior Minister Abdul Amir al Shammari continued his official visit to Iran. Shammari visited the Law Enforcement Command (LEC) Cyber Police Headquarters on May 30 and met with its chief, Brigadier General Vahid Majid.[76] Shammari and Majid discussed the LEC Cyber Police's techniques for detecting, preventing, and combatting "cybercrimes," such as cyber attacks.[77] Shammari also traveled to Qom on May 29 and met with Javad Shahrashtani, who is the special representative of prominent Iraqi Shia cleric Ali al Sistani to Iran.[78] LEC Qom Province Chief Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Mir Heydari accompanied Shammari in Qom.[79] Iraqi Border Guard Commander Mohammad Abdul Wahab Sukkar separately met with LEC Border Guard Chief Brigadier General Ahmad Ali Goudarzi to discuss border security and Arbaeen pilgrimage preparations. Sukkar is part of Shammari's delegation.[80]

Iranian Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Shamkhani is continuing to re-enter public Iranian discourse ahead of the Iranian presidential election in June 2024. Shamkhani called for social justice, protecting legal freedoms, and political independence in a post on X (Twitter) on May 30.[81] Shamkhani similarly posted on X on May 29 that the next Iranian president must prioritize improving Iran's economic, political, and security position in the Middle East.[82] Shamkhani's campaign-like remarks follow reports by Iranian journalists on May 27 that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei appointed Shamkhani to lead nuclear negotiations with the United States.[83] CTP-ISW previously hypothesized that Shamkhani is positioning himself to either run for president or receive a high-level appointment in the next administration.[84]

Iranian border guards clashed with Pakistani individuals around the Iran-Pakistan border on May 28, killing four Pakistanis and wounding two others.[85] Pakistan is investigating the incident at the time of this writing.



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