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October 12, 2024, Information Cutoff: 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 <u>here</u> to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

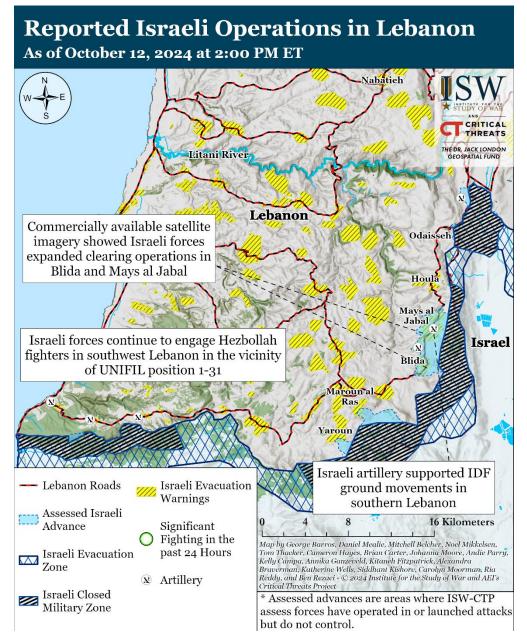
CTP-ISW defines the "Axis of Resistance" as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests.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

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

Lebanese Hezbollah is falsely presenting Israeli ground operations as a failure in order to degrade Israeli will and underscore Hezbollah's own resilience in the face of massive Hezbollah losses since mid-September. Hezbollah claimed that Israeli forces have failed to take control of any tactically significant hills or ridgelines in southern Lebanon.[1] Hezbollah asserted that Israeli forces have only advanced to the outskirts of Lebanese towns and are using propaganda images to misrepresent military successes. Geolocated footage and commercially available satellite imagery show Israeli forces are operating in the center of southern Lebanese towns, however.[2] CTP-ISW observed on October 11 that Israeli forces also appear to have at least partially secured some villages in southern Lebanon given the presence of Israeli journalists and unarmored engineering vehicles.[3] Securing a village would require Israeli forces to prevent Hezbollah from using direct or observed indirect fire weapons against the villages.[4] An Israeli military correspondent further reported that Israeli forces seized territory along ridges and hills just inside of Lebanon within a few days of the ground operation starting on October 1.[5]

Hezbollah fighters and Israeli forces are in contact in the areas surrounding UNIFIL position 1-31 south of Labbouneh, southwestern Lebanon. Hezbollah claimed that it has repelled repeated IDF attempts to advance from Ras Nagoura and Jal al Alam, northwest Israel, to Labbouneh, southwest Lebanon since October 7.[6] Hezbollah said that its fighters engaged Israeli forces moving northwards from areas close to UNIFIL position 1-31 near Labbouneh. Commercially available satellite imagery and UNIFIL reports confirm that Israeli forces have advanced to UNIFIL position 1-31 as of October 11.[7] The ongoing fighting close to UNIFIL position 1-31 is likely the cause of recent UNIFIL reports that multiple unspecified explosions have occurred close the outposts injured to and several peacekeepers.[8] UNIFIL is present in southern Lebanon to monitor the implementation of UN Resolution 1701 which requires Hezbollah fighters to remain north of the Litani River and to "take all necessary action" to prevent the area from being used for hostile activities.[9]

Hezbollah claimed that its fighters continue to target IDF rear positions in northern Israel and "support lines" as part of its defense against Israel's ground operation in southern Lebanon.[10] Attacks on IDF support elements are meant to degrade the IDF's ability to conduct effective ground operations. CTP-ISW has recorded Hezbollah attacks on IDF military targets along the Israel-Lebanon border but has not observed any effect on Israeli ground operations.



The New York Times reported that Hamas asked for Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah participation in the October 7 attacks in July 2023, underscoring the coordination between Hamas and the wider Axis of Resistance before the operation.[11] Hamas initially sought to attack in Fall 2022, according to minutes from Hamas meetings that the IDF captured in the central Gaza Strip in late January 2024. Hamas delayed the planned Fall 2022 attack to convince Iran and Hezbollah to participate. Hamas Political Bureau member and current Deputy Hamas leader Khalil al Hayya met with the head of the IRGC Quds Force Palestinian Affairs Office and a senior Hezbollah official in July 2023. Hayya specifically requested Hezbollah and Iran target sensitive Israeli sites as the Hamas attack began. The IRGC Quds Force official reportedly told Hayya that Iran and Hezbollah supported the attack in principle but needed time to "prepare the environment."

This meeting demonstrates that Iran had strategic foreknowledge of the October 7 attacks, but it remains unclear if Iran or Hezbollah had tactical knowledge of the attack's exact timing. Iran and Hezbollah's hesitation may reflect the reality that Iran and Hezbollah would have needed to prepare their own operational plans to support Hamas' plans successfully, which could take many months. Both Iran and Hezbollah supported the theory of ground attacks into Israel from Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, and Hezbollah had prepared to undertake such an attack if necessary.[12]

Hamas' decision to move forward with the attacks despite a lack of Iranian and Hezbollah full-scale involvement reflects differences in the relative prioritization of objectives within the Axis of Resistance. The *New York Times* reported that Hamas leaders felt pressure to attack Israel due to a variety of factors including Israel's deployment of a new air defense system, ongoing Israel-Saudi Arabia normalization discussions, and Israeli actions in the West Bank and with the al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.[13] Israeli forces in Summer 2023 conducted a series of operations against Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas elements in the West Bank.[14] This divergence in prioritization of specific objectives further underscores the reality that the Axis of Resistance is not a monolithic system of Iranian proxies but rather an unconventional alliance network of like-minded actors across the Middle East led and dominated by Iran.

Hamas executed a sophisticated military deception campaign in support of the October 7 attacks, which contributed to the lack of Israeli preparedness for the attack. This deception effort was likely explicitly designed to exploit pre-existing Israeli biases toward believing Israel had deterred Hamas. The US military defines military deception as actions taken to deliberately mislead adversary decisionmakers to contribute to the accomplishment of the mission.[15] The New York Times reported that Hamas deliberately avoided major engagements with Israel from 2021 to 2023 and conserved ammunition as a part of a deception campaign that would give the impression that Israeli military might had deterred Hamas.[16] Top Israeli officials, including the prime minister, believed that Israel had deterred Hamas.[17] Hamas' decision to purposefully give the impression it was deterred would have reinforced these biases.

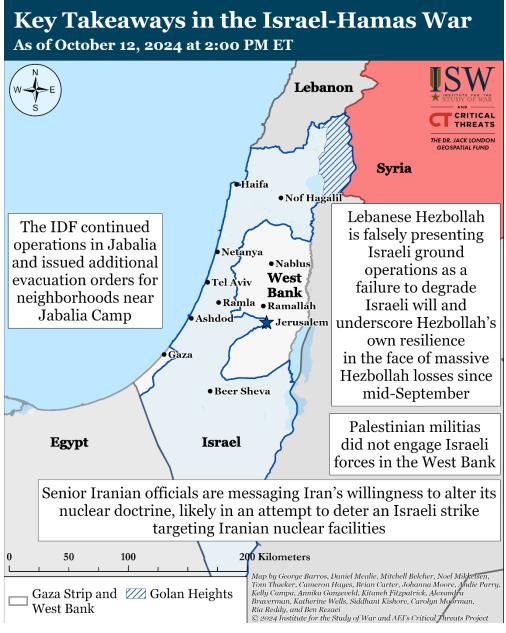
Iranian politicians are continuing to coordinate politically with the Lebanese government. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf made an unannounced visit to Beirut on October 11 as he traveled to Switzerland.[18] Ghalibaf told reporters in Beirut that he changed his travel plans to convey a message of support from Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to the Lebanese people and government. Ghalibaf discussed Iranian efforts to secure a ceasefire that would end Israeli operations in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip during a meeting with Lebanese caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati.[19] Mikati emphasized the Lebanese government's commitment to implementing UN Resolution 1701 and strengthening the Lebanese Armed Forces presence in southern Lebanon.[20] This UN resolution, which ended the 2006 Lebanon war, requires Hezbollah forces to remain north of the Litani River.[21] Ghalibaf expressed further support for the Lebanese government and people in a joint press conference with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri.[22] Ghalibaf is the second Iranian politician to visit Beirut since the start of Israeli ground operations in Lebanon following the October 4 visit of Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi.[23]

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf's visit to Beirut also likely seeks to message Iranian commitment to its supporters and partners in Lebanon–including Lebanese Hezbollah–given that Iranian military operations have not deterred or disrupted Israeli operations in Lebanon. Ghalibaf visited areas recently targeted in Israeli airstrikes in central and southern Beirut and expressed sympathy to the families affected by the strikes.[24] Ghalibaf stated that Iran will help rebuild central and southern Beirut.[25] Ghalibaf also met with unspecified "heads of Palestinian parties" at the Iranian embassy in Beirut.[26] Ghalibaf vowed to convey the "message" of the Palestinian and Lebanese people as he left Beirut to attend the Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting in Geneva, Switzerland.[27]

Senior Iranian officials are messaging Iran's willingness to alter its nuclear doctrine, likely in an attempt to pressure the United States to discourage an Israeli strike targeting Iranian nuclear facilities while attempting to deter the Israelis. A senior political advisor to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Brigadier General Rasoul Sanaei Rad, indicated in a recent interview on October 9 that Iran may reconsider its nuclear doctrine if Israel targets Iranian nuclear facilities.[28] Certain factions within the Iranian regime have recently voiced support for changing Iran's nuclear doctrine. These statements and actions in support of changing the doctrine are likely aimed both at the United States and Israel. The recent statements and actions in support of changing the doctrine, which include a call by 39 Iranian parliamentarians to revise Iranian defense doctrine to allow for an enhanced nuclear capacity, are the latest in a series of statements since May 2024 that suggest at least some elements within the regime are agitating against the current nuclear policy.[29] Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei set the current policy in 2003 when he issued a fatwa against nuclear weapons. Khamenei holds the ultimate authority over the nuclear issue and the fatwa will remain in effect unless he decides otherwise.[30]

Key Takeaways:

- **Hezbollah Information Operations:** Lebanese Hezbollah is falsely presenting Israeli ground operations as a failure to degrade Israeli will and underscore Hezbollah's resilience in the face of massive Hezbollah losses since mid-September.
- **Israeli Ground Operations in Lebanon:** Hezbollah fighters and Israeli forces are in contact in the areas surrounding UNIFIL position 1-31 south of Labbouneh, southwestern Lebanon. The ongoing fighting close to UNIFIL position 1-31 is likely the cause of recent UNIFIL reports that multiple unspecified explosions have occurred close to the outposts and injured several peacekeepers.
- **Hamas:** The New York Times reported that Hamas asked for Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah participation in the October 7 attacks in July 2023, underscoring the coordination between Hamas and the wider Axis of Resistance before the operation. This ask demonstrates that Iran had strategic foreknowledge of the October 7 attacks, but it remains unclear if Iran or Hezbollah had tactical knowledge of the attack's exact timing.
- **Iran:** Iranian politicians are continuing to coordinate politically with the Lebanese government. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf made an unannounced visit to Beirut on October 11 as he traveled to Switzerland.
- **Iranian Nuclear Doctrine:** Senior Iranian officials are messaging Iran's willingness to alter its nuclear doctrine, likely in an attempt to pressure the United States to discourage an Israeli strike targeting Iranian nuclear facilities while attempting to deter the Israelis.



<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 continued clearing operations in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on October 12.[31] The IDF 162nd Division killed more than 20 fighters in combat operations in the Jabalia area.[32] The New York Times reported that Israeli airstrikes in Jabalia on October 12 have killed at least 20 people.[33] Hamas and the Popular Resistance Committees condemned these recent Israeli strikes in Jabalia.[34] The IDF Air Force has previously struck multiple Hamas command-and-control sites used to target Israeli soldiers since the IDF began its operation in Jabalia on October 6.[35] Palestinian militias, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), conducted multiple attacks targeting Israeli forces and armor within and near Jabalia on October 12.[36]

The IDF said it has killed over 200 militia fighters since launching an operation into Jabalia refugee camp on October 6.[37]

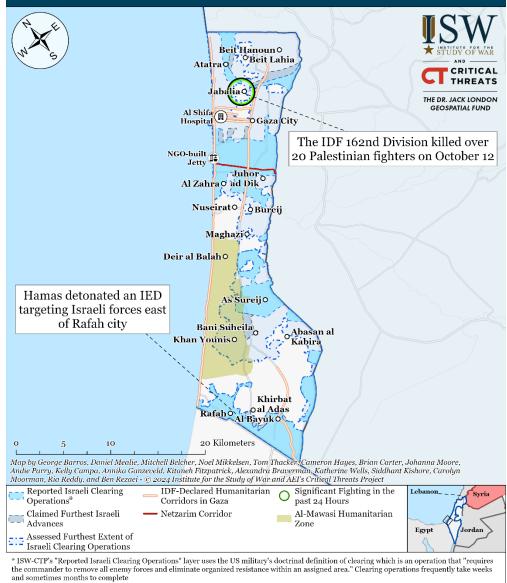
The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson announced evacuation orders for areas within Jabalia City and Sheikh Radwan near Jabalia Camp on October 12.[38] A Palestinian journalist has reported Israeli vehicles in the areas surrounding Jabalia.[39]

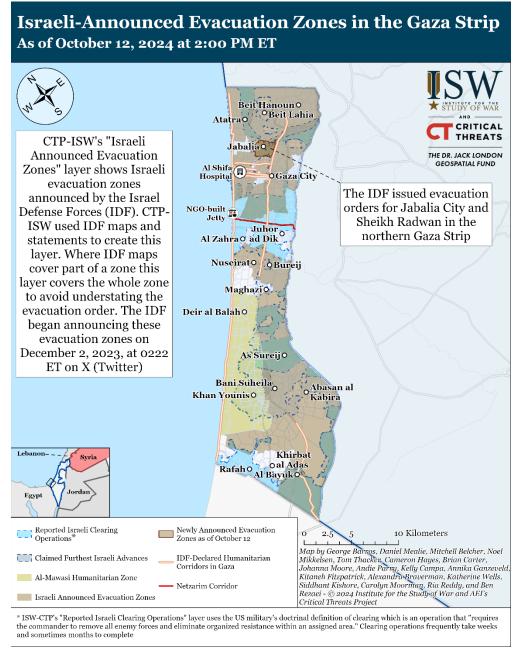
The IDF 252nd Division killed multiple groups of Palestinian fighters in the central Gaza Strip on October 12, including fighters that fired anti-tank guided missiles at Israeli forces.[40] A Palestinian journalist reported multiple instances of gunfire from Israeli vehicles north of Nuseirat refugee camp.[41]

The Popular Resistance Committees fired a rocket targeting an Israeli position near the Netzarim Corridor on October 12.[42] The IDF 252nd Division also operates along the corridor.[43]

The IDF 143rd Division killed multiple Palestinian fighters in Rafah who were attacking Israeli forces on October 12.[44] The IDF said that a combat officer from the School of Military Engineering was seriously wounded in battle in Rafah on October 12.[45]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip As of October 12, 2024, 2:00 PM ET





Palestinian militias conducted two indirect fire attacks targeting Southern Israel on October 12.[46] PIJ launched rockets targeting Ashkelon that fell in an open area.[47]



West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

• Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Israeli forces have not engaged Palestinian fighters in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on October 11.

Northern Israel and Lebanon

Axis of Resistance objectives:

• Deter Israel from conducting a ground operation into Lebanon

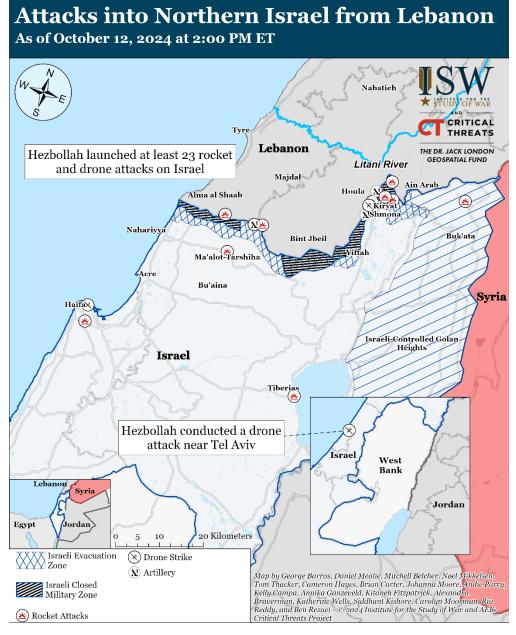
- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

Israeli forces continued clearing operations in unspecified areas of southern Lebanon. The IDF reported that Israeli forces killed over 50 Hezbollah fighters during combat operations in southern Lebanon.[48] Ground forces located tunnel shafts and weapons storage sites.

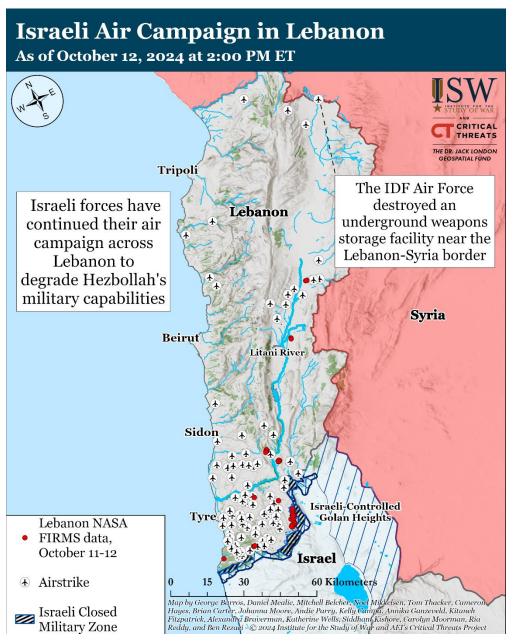
The IDF 98th Division continued clearing operations in southeastern Lebanese towns on October 12. Commercially available satellite imagery shows Israeli forces expanded clearing operations to encompass Blida and Mays al Jabal. Hezbollah has launched one rocket and one mortar attack at Israeli forces operating in Blida since CTP-ISW's data cut off on October 11.[49] Israeli forces have been operating in these towns at least since October 8. Hezbollah also launched a rocket attack targeting Israeli forces in Kafr Kila.[50]

Hezbollah conducted at least 23 drone and rocket attacks into Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on October 11.[51] Hezbollah launched drones targeting the "outskirts" of Tel Aviv on October 11.[52] The IDF confirmed that two Hezbollah drones crossed into Israeli territory on October 11.[53] The IDF intercepted one drone, and the other impacted and damaged a residential building in Herzliya, north of Tel Aviv.[54]The Mossad headquarters is located at the Glilot Junction near southern Herzliya. Hezbollah conducted at least three rocket and drone attacks targeting civilian locations in Israel.[55]

The IDF Home Front Command eased guidelines for certain communities in the northern and southern Golan Heights on October 12.[56] The IDF stated that these areas can now hold educational activities.[57] The IDF also eased guidance to allow for more people to attend gatherings for two communities on Mount Carmel, south of Haifa.[58]



Israeli forces continued their air campaign across Lebanon to degrade Hezbollah's military capabilities on October 12. The IDF struck at least 111 Hezbollah targets, primarily in southern Lebanon.[59] The IDF stated that it destroyed 200 Hezbollah targets in Lebanon in air strikes and artillery operations over the past day.[60] The IDF Air Force destroyed "dozens of rocket launchers and surface-to-surface missiles" stored in southern Lebanon.[61] The IDF Air Force also destroyed an underground weapons storage facility located near the Syria-Lebanon border.[62] The strike targeted border area near al Qusayr, Syria, which is a stronghold for Lebanese Hezbollah and a frequent transit route for Iranian weapons shipments to Hezbollah in Lebanon.[63]



This map illustrates individual Israeli air and artillery strikes based on local Lebanese reporting. This map depicts strikes reported from 2:00pm ET on October 11 to 2:00pm ET on October 12. This map is not exhaustive. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify the locations of Israeli strikes.

Iran and the Axis of Resistance

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed two attacks targeting Israel since CTP-ISW's last cutoff on October 11.[64] The claims include the following:

• Two drone attacks targeting unspecified "vital targets" in the Golan Heights in the late evening on October 11th and the early morning on October 12.[65]

The IDF separately intercepted one drone that entered Israeli airspace from Syria and fell in an open area in the northern Golan Heights on the afternoon of October 11.[66] The Islamic Resistance of Iraq has not claimed this attack at the time of this writing.

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[1] https://t.me/mmirleb/7797

[2] https://x.com/isaacyeephoto/status/1844638734412808262 ; https://x.com/TwistyCB/status/1844644496140620019

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[25] https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1403/07/21/3176225

[26] (https://www.mehrnews dot com/news/6254619/)

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[40] https://x.com/idfonline/status/1845133793566302560

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[44] https://x.com/idfonline/status/1845133793566302560 60

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