

# Iran Update, November 20, 2023

Andie Parry, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, Peter Mills,  
Annika Ganzeveld, Amin Soltani, and Brian Carter

**Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm EST**

*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. For more on developments in Iran and the region, see our [interactive map of Iran and the Middle East](#).*

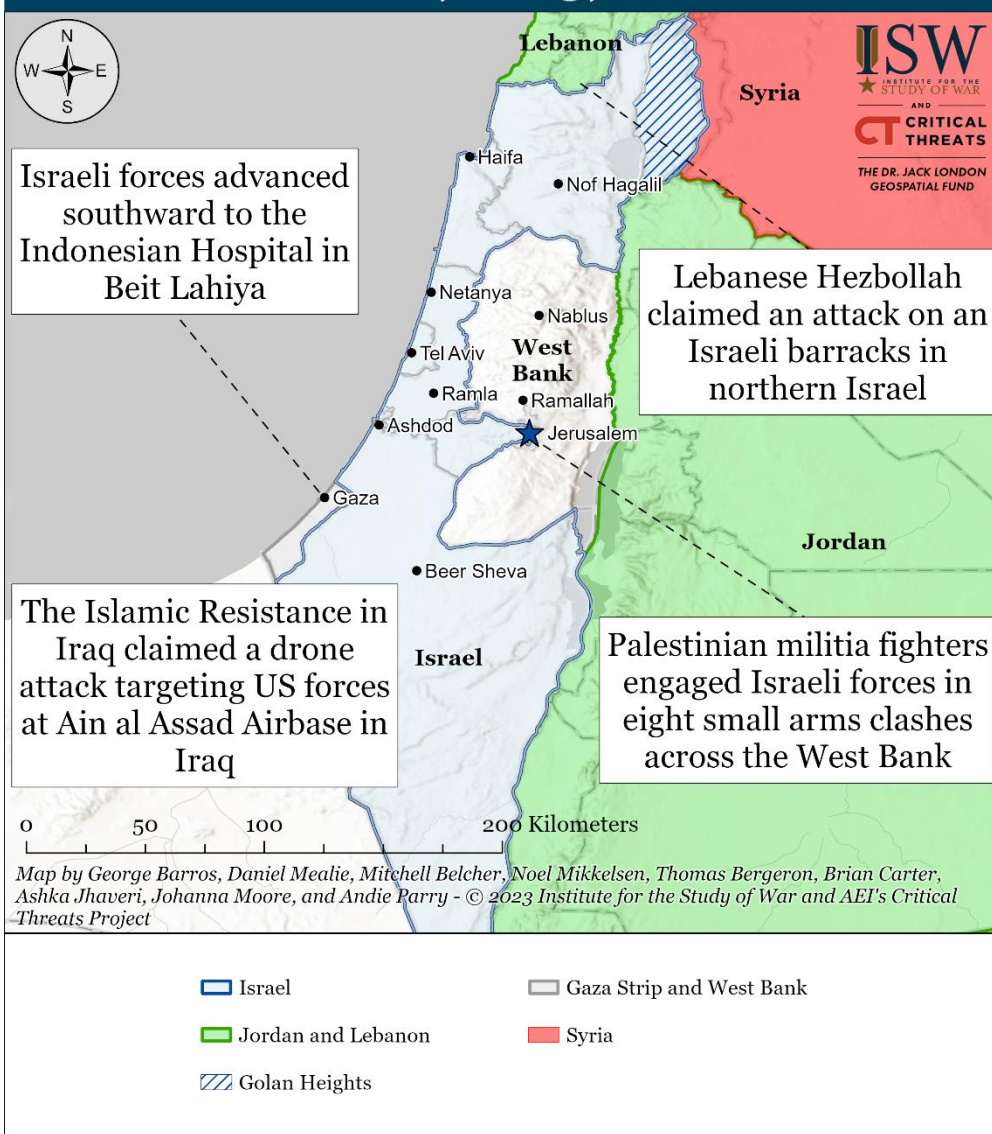
*Note: CTP and ISW have refocused the update to cover the Israel-Hamas war. The new sections address developments in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as noteworthy activity from Iran's Axis of Resistance. We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are 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.*

*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.*

## **Key Takeaways:**

1. Israeli forces advanced to the Indonesian Hospital in Beit Lahiya bordering northern Jabalia refugee camp on November 20. They clashed with Palestinian militia fighters along the western border of Jabalia refugee camp and neighborhood.
2. Hamas and other Palestinian militia fighters attacked the IDF behind the Israeli forward line of advance in the Zaytoun area in the middle of the Gaza Strip, which is consistent with the nature of clearing operations.
3. Palestinian militia fighters engaged Israeli forces in eight small arms clashes across the West Bank on November 20. Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine continue to call for attacks against Israeli soldiers and civilians in the West Bank.
4. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed a one-way drone attack targeting US forces at Ain al Assad Airbase in Iraq on November 20.
5. Unspecified Iranian-backed militia leaders in Syria met to discuss plans for responding to US airstrikes in the region.

# Israel-Hamas War as of November 20, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



## Gaza Strip

### Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to launch and sustain a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip
- Degrade IDF material and morale around the Gaza Strip

**Israeli forces advanced to the Indonesian Hospital in Beit Lahiya bordering northern Jabalia refugee camp on November 20.**[1] Israeli forces advanced southward from cleared positions in Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya.[2] Local journalists posted videos of Israeli tanks surrounding the hospital and explosions in the vicinity.[3] The Gaza Health Ministry director, Dr. Munir al Bursh, stated that Israeli tanks remained at the hospital's northern gate.[4] The al Quds

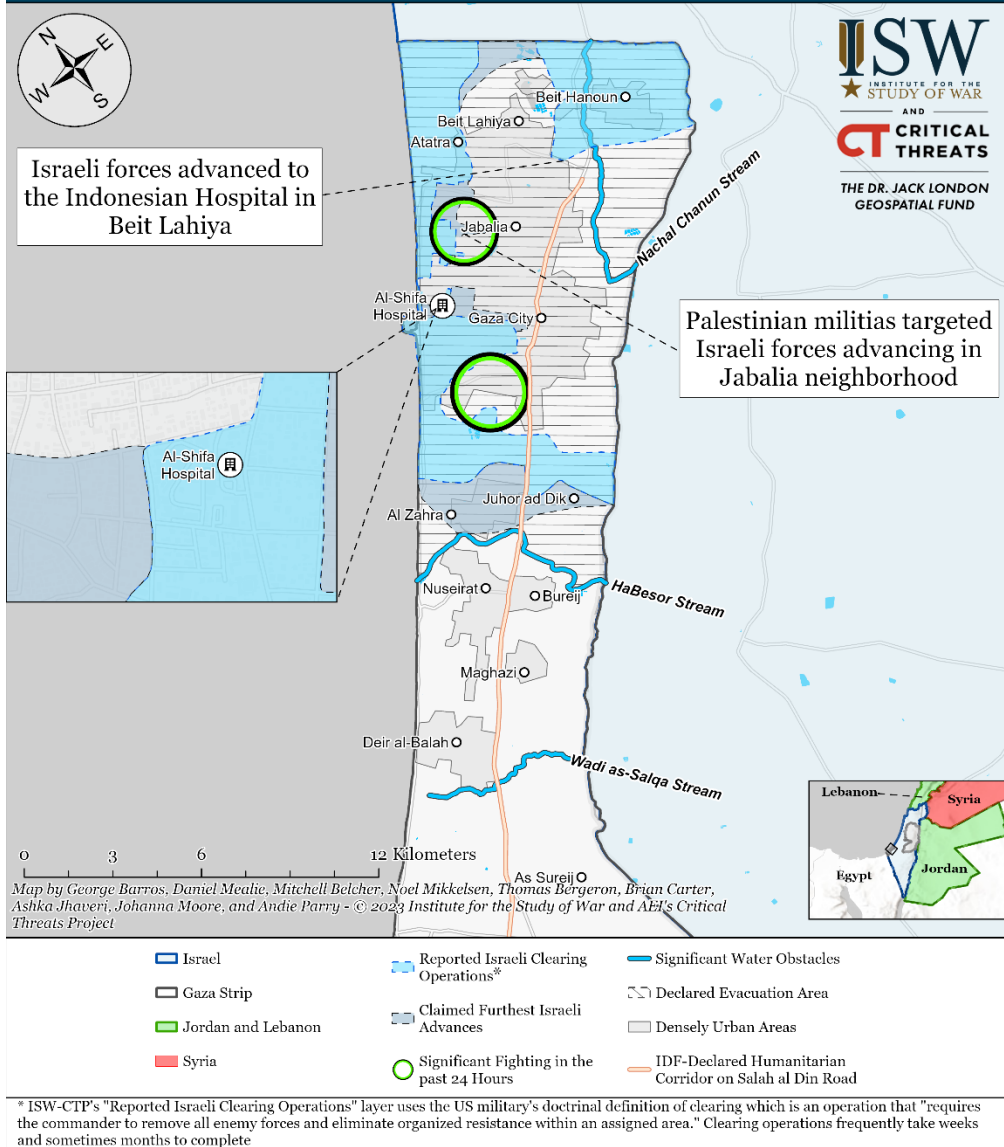
Brigades—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)— claimed mortar attacks on Israeli forces as they advanced to the Indonesian Hospital near Sheikh Zayed Towers.[5] A local source reported heavy fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters on the al Awda road heading southward to the Indonesian Hospital.[6] An IDF spokesperson said Hamas’ northern brigade maintains a command-and-control center and critical strongholds in Jabalia on November 18.[7] Israeli forces instructed a hospital inside the Jabalia refugee camp to evacuate on November 20.[8] The Israeli Army Radio said that only 25 percent of residents in Jabalia had evacuated on November 19.[9]

**Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian militia fighters along the western border of Jabalia refugee camp and neighborhood on November 20.** The al Quds Brigades claimed to fire tandem shells and bombs at Israeli military vehicles to the west side of Jabalia refugee camp.[10] The al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades—the self-proclaimed militant wing of Fatah—and al Quds Brigades conducted a combined operation attacking three Israeli armored vehicles and soldiers in the Sheikh Radwan area southwest of Jabalia refugee camp.[11] Hamas’ military spokesperson Abu Obeida stated that fighters from the al Qassem Brigades—the militant wing of Hamas—clashed with Israeli troops west of the Jabalia refugee camp and in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood.[12]

**Hamas and other Palestinian militia fighters attacked the IDF behind the Israeli forward line of advance, which is consistent with the nature of clearing operations.** The IDF said that its forces engaged in hand-to-hand battles against militants to defeat the Hamas Zaytoun Battalion, operating in the Zaytoun area on November 20.[13] The al Quds Brigades fired rocket-propelled grenades and clashed with Israeli soldiers in the Zaytoun area in the middle of the Gaza Strip near the Gaza Wadi.[14] Obeida stated that al Qassem Brigades fighters fired mortars and detonated IEDs targeting Israeli forces advancing south of the Zaytoun area.[15] The al Quds Brigades claimed its fighters killed and wounded six Israeli soldiers in clashes as Israeli forces attempted to advance from west of Beit Lahia.[16]

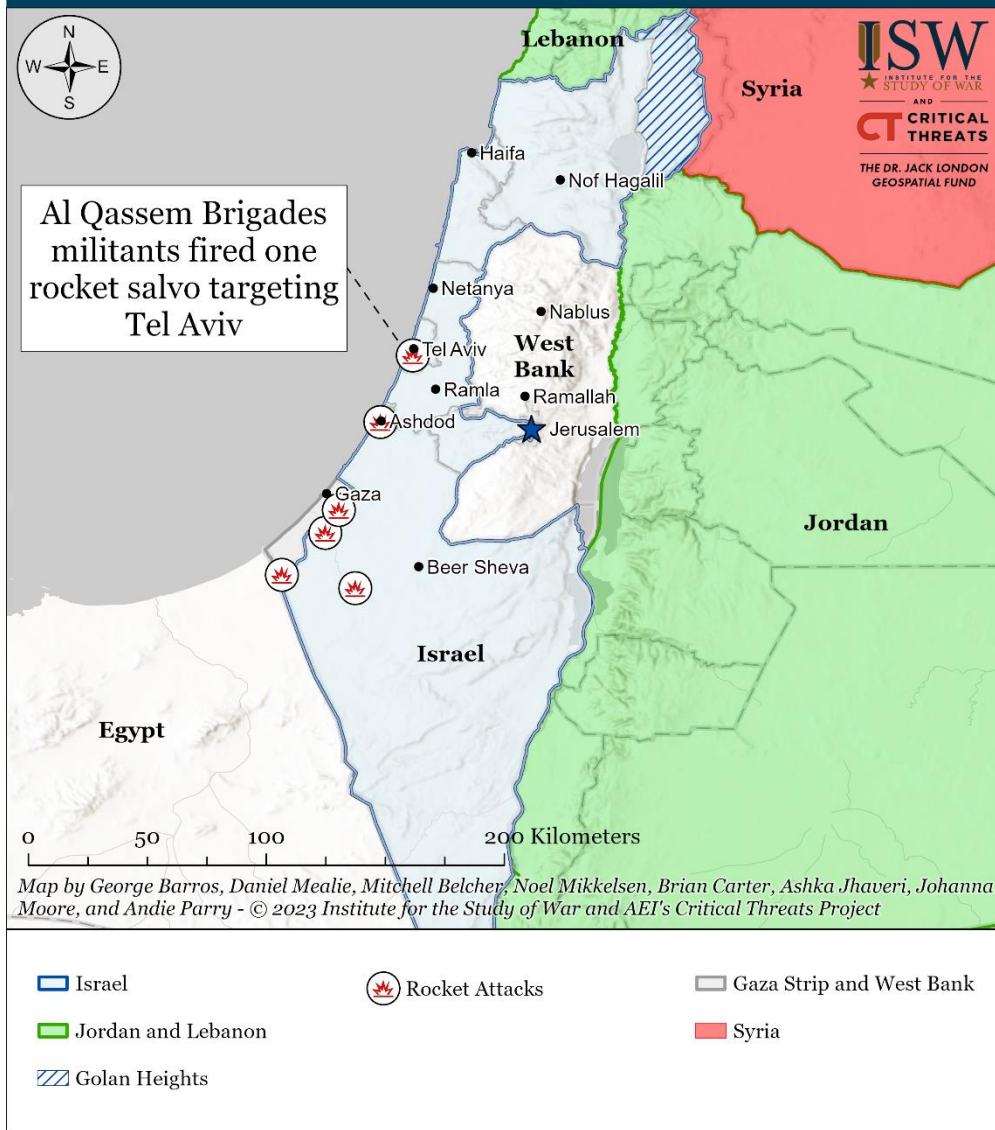
**Israeli forces have arrested over 300 militant fighters in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war.**[17] The Israeli forces received information on the locations of underground tunnels, warehouses, weapons, and methods and that Hamas camouflaged civilian facilities through interviews with the detained militia fighters.[18] IDF forces conducted an airstrike to kill three al Qassem Brigades company commanders in the Gaza Strip on November 20.[19]

# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of November 20, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



**Palestinian militias conducted seven indirect fire attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israel on November 20.** The al Quds Brigades claimed that it launched three mortar attacks and one rocket attack targeting southern Israel.<sup>[20]</sup> The al Qassem Brigades said that it launched two rocket attacks targeting Israel, including one salvo targeting Tel Aviv.<sup>[21]</sup> Unspecified Palestinian militia fighters fired one rocket salvo targeting Ashdod.<sup>[22]</sup>

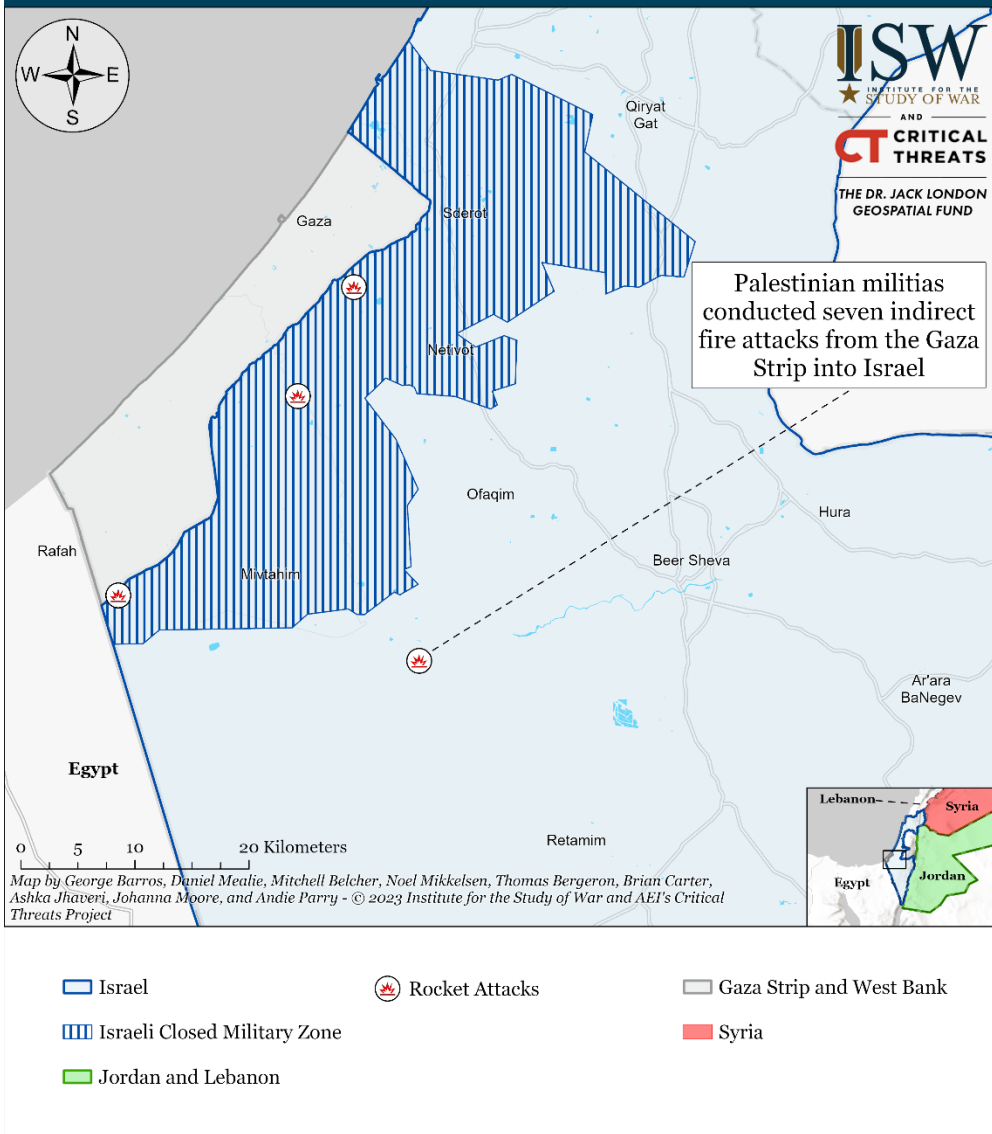
# Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of November 20, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



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



# Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of November 20, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



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

## West Bank

### Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Draw IDF assets and resources toward the West Bank and fix them there

**Palestinian militia fighters engaged Israeli forces in eight small arms clashes across the West Bank on November 20.** The Jericho Battalion of the al Quds Brigades said that its fighters clashed with Israeli forces near Jericho.<sup>[23]</sup> The Salfit Battalion (the Martyr Omar Abu Laila Battalion) claimed that it attacked two civilian vehicles driven by Israeli settlers near al Zawiya, West Bank.<sup>[24]</sup> The Salfit Battalion announced its establishment in March 2023.<sup>[25]</sup> It does not publicly

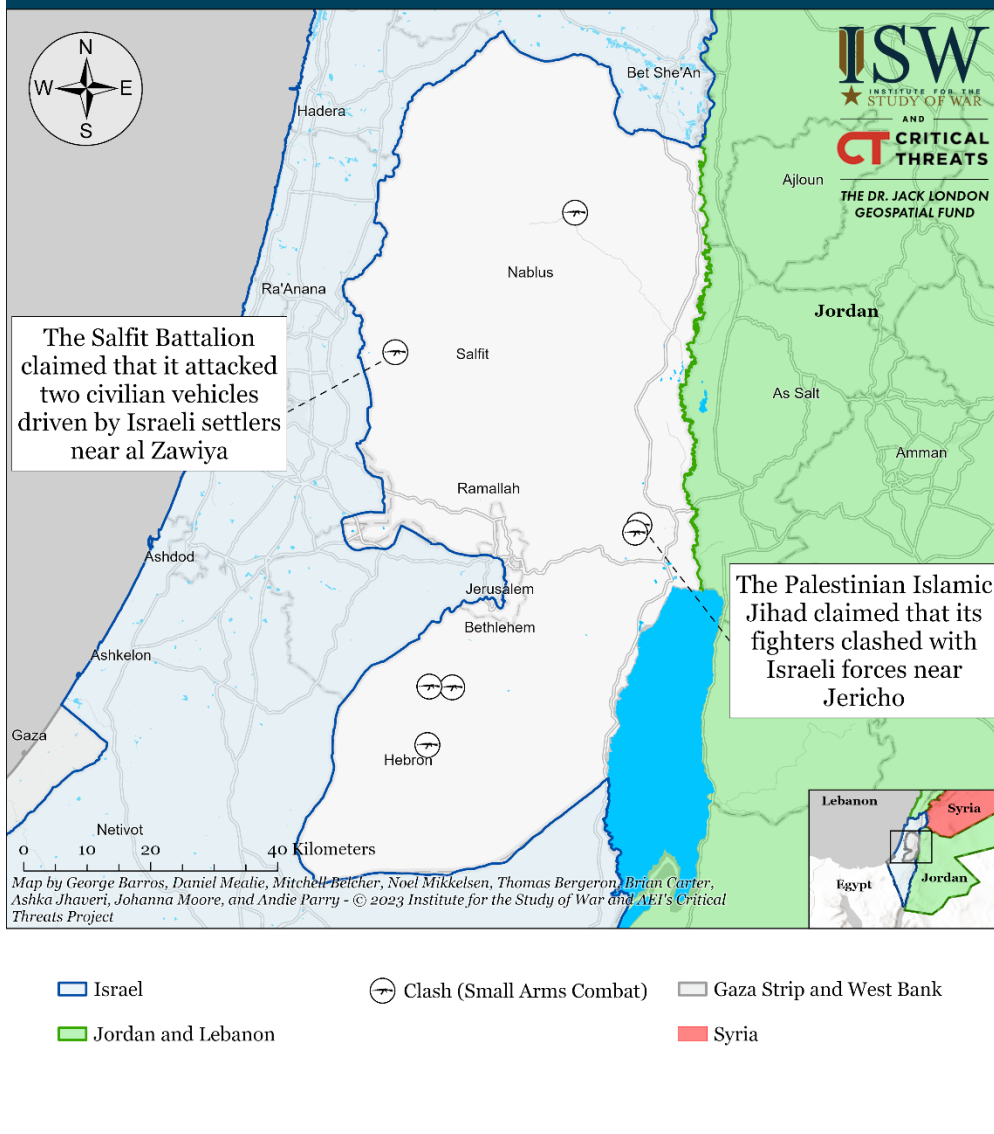
acknowledge any affiliation with other Palestinian militia groups. Unspecified Palestinian militia fighters engaged in six small arms clashes with Israeli forces, primarily near Hebron, on November 20. CTP-ISW did not record any IED attacks in the West Bank for the first time since November 11.

**Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) continue to call for attacks against Israeli soldiers and civilians in the West Bank.** West Bank-focused Hamas leader Abdul Rahman Shadid called on the West Bank to mobilize in support of Gaza and the al Aqsa Flood operation.<sup>[26]</sup> Shadid has previously called on West Bank Palestinians to “escalate” against Israel since October 7.<sup>[27]</sup> The PFLP issued statements on November 19-20 calling for the Palestinian Authority’s security services to join the PFLP in conducting attacks on Israeli forces.<sup>[28]</sup> The PFLP previously called for violence against Israeli civilians on November 9 and November 14.<sup>[29]</sup>

CTP-ISW recorded one demonstration against Israel in Hebron following IDF raids there.<sup>[30]</sup>

Local media in the West Bank reported that Israeli forces arrested 47 people on November 20.<sup>[31]</sup> The IDF said that it arrested 16 “wanted persons,” including two Hamas members, in the West Bank.<sup>[32]</sup>

# Clashes in the West Bank as of November 20, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



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

## Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

### Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

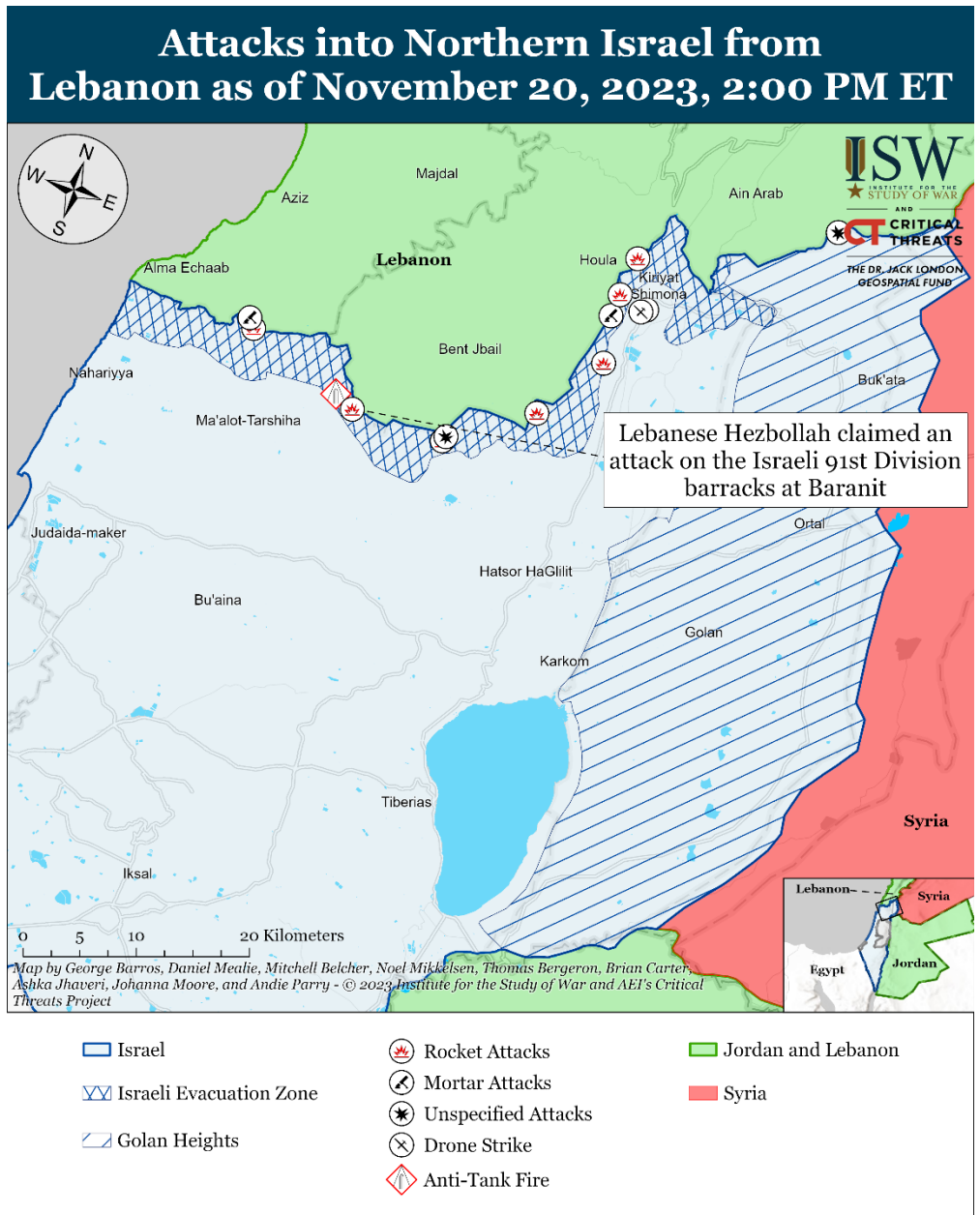
- Draw IDF assets and resources toward northern Israel and fix them there
- Set conditions for successive campaigns into northern Israel

**CTP-ISW recorded 18 attacks on November 20 into Israeli territory from Lebanon.[33] This rate is slightly above the weekly average of 15 attacks per day.** Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) and other unidentified militants targeted Israeli military sites along the border in 10 of the 17 attacks.[34] LH claimed a rocket attack targeting the 91<sup>st</sup> Division barracks



at Barranit.[35] LH claimed that its fighters fired multiple Burkan rockets at the barracks.[36] Footage released by LH showed two rockets fired at the base, both of which landed in the vicinity of the military facility.[37] Israeli and Palestinian media circulated footage of damage to the military facility at Barranit caused by the rocket strike.[38]

Note: CTP-ISW refined its data layer in northern Israel to account for unspecified attack types. Lebanese Hezbollah regularly claims attacks with “appropriate weapons.” This data is insufficient to determine the method of attack. Attack claims citing “appropriate weapons” will be tracked as “unspecified” until CTP-ISW can verify the type of attack.



## **Iran and Axis of Resistance**

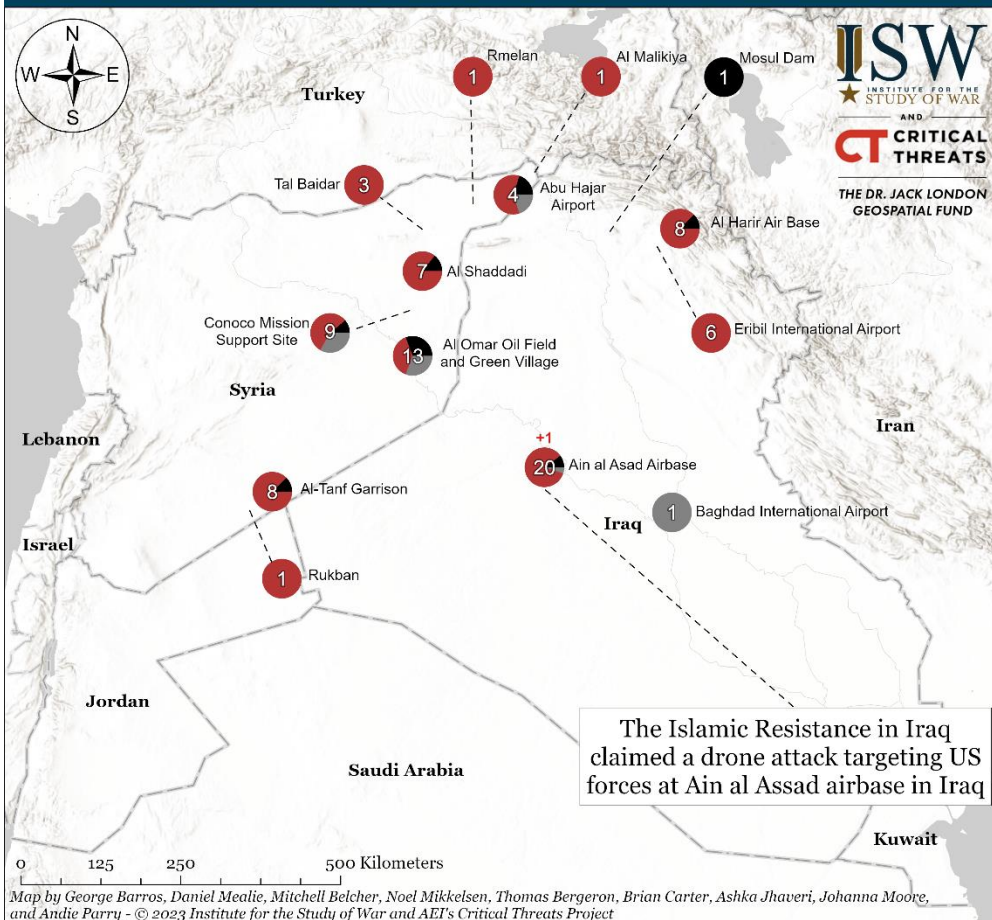
### **Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:**

- Demonstrate the capability and willingness of Iran and the Axis of Resistance to escalate against the United States and Israel on multiple fronts
- Set conditions to fight a regional war on multiple fronts

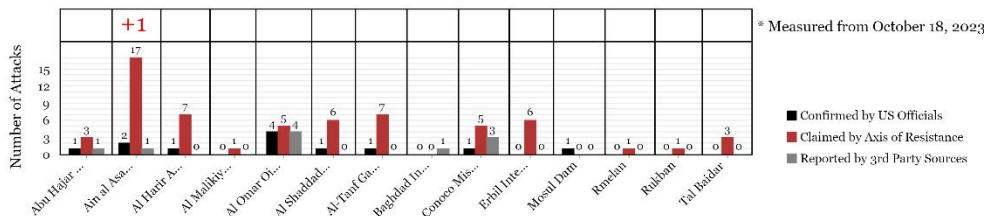
**The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed a one-way drone attack targeting US forces at Ain al Assad airbase in Iraq on November 20.[39]** The group has claimed 64 attacks on US forces stationed in Iraq and Syria since October 18. The group most recently attacked Ain al Assad airbase on November 17, and it published footage on November 19 of the two one-way attack drones it used in the November 17 attack.[40]

**Unspecified Iranian-backed militia leaders in Syria met to discuss plans for responding to US airstrikes in the region.** The unspecified leaders discussed “escalatory steps” and how they would respond to US airstrikes, according to a local anti-Iranian media outlet.[41] The United States has conducted three strikes in Syria targeting Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-affiliated groups and infrastructure to retaliate for the rocket and drone attacks against US bases in Iraq and Syria. Iranian-backed militia attacks have caused dozens of minor injuries among US personnel since October 18.[42]

# Attacks against US Bases in the Middle East as of November 20, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project



Note: The numbers placed inside the pie charts denote the total number of attacks. Locations that include an addition to its total number of attacks have red numbers above the bar graph and pie chart to represent new attacks against that location within the past 24 hours.

**Former IRGC Commander and current Vice President for Economic Affairs Mohsen Rezaei warned on November 19 that new fronts will open against Israel “in the coming days.”**[43] Rezaei issued the warning in an interview with the LH-affiliated outlet al Mayadeen.[44] Rezaei is a prominent figure in the Iranian regime, having served as IRGC commander between 1980 and 1997.[45] Rezaei also warned that the Axis of Resistance “will play a bigger role in the future” and that Israel will not be able to “prevent the reaction of Muslim youths” if it continues its operations in the Gaza Strip. Rezaei’s comments mirror similar warnings from other Iranian officials about the potential expansion of the conflict since October 7. Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian warned on October 16, for example, that resistance groups would take “preemptive

action” against Israel “in the coming hours.”<sup>[46]</sup> The Axis of Resistance notably did not follow through on Abdollahian’s threat in the hours after he issued it.

**IRGC-affiliated media are conducting an information operation claiming that the Hamas attack on the Nova music festival near Kibbutz Reim on October 7 was an Israeli false flag operation.**<sup>[47]</sup> Fars and Tasnim news agencies are advancing this information line based on debunked claims.<sup>[48]</sup> Confirmed footage demonstrates that IDF Apache helicopters engaged Hamas fighters and not Israeli civilians on October 7.

**Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian held a phone call with his Qatari counterpart Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani on November 20.**<sup>[49]</sup> The two officials discussed the need for the international community to exert pressure on Israel to discontinue its operations in the Gaza Strip. The two officials could have also discussed a range of other topics, including Iranian access to its frozen financial assets inside Qatari banks.<sup>[50]</sup> Iranian and Qatari officials have engaged in political coordination vis-a-vis the Israel-Hamas war since at least October 14, as CTP-ISW previously reported.<sup>[51]</sup>

POWERED BY:



BABEL STREET

[1] [https://twitter.com/gaza\\_report/status/1726508669020536832](https://twitter.com/gaza_report/status/1726508669020536832)

[2] [https://twitter.com/gaza\\_report/status/1726501369115500997](https://twitter.com/gaza_report/status/1726501369115500997)

[3] <https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1726472728914571570> ;

<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1726529973987725743>

[4] [https://t.me/mihwar\\_almuqawama/40147](https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/40147);

<https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1726502725817389185> ;

<https://twitter.com/qudsn/status/1726493380971057253>

[5] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16713>

[6] <https://t.me/beitlahiaNews/7666>

[7] <https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1725890537520091244>

[8] <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1726406408483004609>

[9] <https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1726168655271182359>

[10] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16712>

[11] <https://t.me/beitlahiaNews/7658>

[12] <https://t.me/hamasps/17880>

[13] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726661834999234971>

[14] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16720>

[15] <https://t.me/hamasps/17880>

[16] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16714>

[17] <https://www.idf dot il/153744>

[18] <https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1726605624140603732/video/2>

[19] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726493470884311140/video/2> ;

<https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726493481319665931>

[20] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16711>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16716>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16716>;

<https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1726608612414603622>

[21] <https://t.me/hamasps/17879>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/508>  
[22] <https://t.me/almanarnews/137239>  
[23] <https://t.me/QudsN/331900>  
[24] <https://t.me/omarabulila/228> ; <https://t.me/HebronNewss/30428> ;  
<https://t.me/QudsN/331740>  
[25] <https://jpost dot com/middle-east/article-735437>  
[26] <https://t.me/jeninnews1/76013>; <https://digitalprojects.palestine-studies dot org/sites/default/files/uploads/files/05-09-2020-05c.pdf>; <https://felesteen dot news/hashtag/40611/%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B4%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF>  
[27] <https://fimeddernegi dot com/2023/10/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D8%B4%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%88-%D8%B4%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B6%D9%81%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A3%D8%A8%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%87%D8%A7>; <https://www.almanar dot com.lb/11140439>  
[28] <https://t.me/pflpgaza1/13491>  
[29] <https://t.me/pflpgaza1/13468> ; <https://t.me/pflpgaza1/13422>  
[30] <https://t.me/QudsN/332044>  
[31] <https://t.me/HebronNewss/30477>  
[32] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726554459038502990>  
[33] <https://t.me/QudsN/331851> ; <https://t.me/HebronNewss/30451> ;  
[https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39878](https://t.me/C_Military1/39878) ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726525212240601462> ;  
<https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1726479411409719615> ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39901](https://t.me/C_Military1/39901) ;  
[https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39893](https://t.me/C_Military1/39893) ; <https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1726582393946144826> ;  
<https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1726515662179483665> ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39890](https://t.me/C_Military1/39890) ;  
<https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726525212240601462> ;  
<https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726525212240601462> ;  
[https://t.me/mihwar\\_almuqawama/40104](https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/40104) ; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/507> ;  
<https://t.me/QudsN/331944> ; [https://t.me/mihwar\\_almuqawama/40108](https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/40108) ;  
<https://t.me/QudsN/331962> ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39903](https://t.me/C_Military1/39903) ; <https://t.me/QudsN/332003> ;  
[https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39908](https://t.me/C_Military1/39908) ; <https://t.me/QudsN/332010> ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39922](https://t.me/C_Military1/39922) ;  
[https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39909](https://t.me/C_Military1/39909) ; <https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1726567023667503535> ;  
[https://t.me/mihwar\\_almuqawama/40136](https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/40136) ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39921](https://t.me/C_Military1/39921) ;  
[https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39915](https://t.me/C_Military1/39915) ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726582881752076764> ;  
<https://t.me/QudsN/332037> ; <https://t.me/HebronNewss/30491> ;  
<https://t.me/HebronNewss/30496> ; <https://t.me/jeninnews1/76045> ;  
<https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726651304100171796>  
[34] [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39878](https://t.me/C_Military1/39878) ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726525212240601462> ;  
<https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1726479411409719615> ;  
<https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1726628898786656747> ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39901](https://t.me/C_Military1/39901) ;  
[https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39893](https://t.me/C_Military1/39893) ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39890](https://t.me/C_Military1/39890) ;  
<https://t.me/qassam1brigades/507> ; <https://t.me/QudsN/331944> ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39903](https://t.me/C_Military1/39903) ;  
<https://t.me/QudsN/332003> ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39908](https://t.me/C_Military1/39908) ; <https://t.me/QudsN/332010> ;  
[https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39922](https://t.me/C_Military1/39922) ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39919](https://t.me/C_Military1/39919) ;  
[https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39909](https://t.me/C_Military1/39909) ; <https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1726567023667503535> ;  
[https://t.me/mihwar\\_almuqawama/40136](https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/40136) ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39921](https://t.me/C_Military1/39921) ;

[https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39915](https://t.me/C_Military1/39915) ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726582881752076764> ;  
<https://t.me/jeninnews1/76045>  
[35] <https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1726628898786656747> ; <https://www.iribnews dot ir/fa/news/4062179/>  
[36] [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39893](https://t.me/C_Military1/39893) ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39878](https://t.me/C_Military1/39878)  
[37] <https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1726628898786656747>  
[38] [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39901](https://t.me/C_Military1/39901) ;  
[https://twitter.com/kann\\_news/status/1726555775349276936](https://twitter.com/kann_news/status/1726555775349276936) ;  
<https://twitter.com/IntelliTimes/status/1726591081847099714> ; <https://t.me/jeninnews1/76008> ;  
<https://t.me/jeninnews1/76023> ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/39928](https://t.me/C_Military1/39928)  
[39] <https://t.me/elamharbi/113>  
[40] <https://t.me/elamharbi/112>  
[41] [https://eyeofeufrates\[dot\]com/index.php/ar/news/2023/11/19/10179](https://eyeofeufrates[dot]com/index.php/ar/news/2023/11/19/10179)  
[42] <https://apnews.com/article/us-syria-airstrikes-iran-irgc-a84ed69e5boef6c9fa18656b72a9fda1>  
[43] <https://www.farsnews dot ir/news/14020828000989>  
[44] <https://www.almayadeen dot net/news/politics>  
[45] <https://www.mei.edu/publications/harsh-irgc-attack-turkey-midst-syria-talks>  
[46] <https://twitter.com/abasaslani/status/1714005468761161841?s=46&t=TMbDQtRFur-HDVAEVR7Byg>  
[47] <https://www.farsnews dot ir/news/14020828000588> ; <https://www.tasnimnews com/fa/news/1402/08/28/2992073>  
[48] <https://x.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1726670408005632422?s=20>  
[49] <https://mfa dot ir/portal/NewsView/734258> ; <https://www.presstv dot ir/Detail/2023/11/20/714943/Iran-Qatar-FMs-urge-world-stop-Israeli-violations-international-law>  
[50] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-14-2023> ;  
<https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-november-14-2023>  
[51] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-14-2023> ;  
<https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-15-2023> ;  
<https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-31-2023> ;  
<https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-november-14-2023>