



Iran Update, November 25, 2023

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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. Hamas released a second round of hostages after Hamas accused Israel of violating the humanitarian pause agreement and threatened to delay the hostages' release.
2. CTP-ISW did not record verifiable reports of kinetic activity inside the Gaza Strip or reports of attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israel.
3. CTP-ISW recorded nine small arms clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters in the West Bank.
4. Palestinian militias are trying to exert greater control over the Palestinian population in the West Bank to facilitate further militia operations against Israeli targets.
5. Israeli and Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) media suggested that LH conducted 2-3 attacks into northern Israel.
6. Iranian-backed Iraqi factions are trying to exploit the Israel-Hamas war to erode US military and political influence in Iraq.
7. Iran and its Axis of Resistance appear to be continuing to threaten Israeli-affiliated commercial shipping.
8. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—did not claim any attacks against US forces in Iraq or Syria.

Gaza Strip



Israel-Hamas War as of November 25, 2023, 2:00 PM ET





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

NOTE: The IDF has said that its forces are stationed along ceasefire lines across the Gaza Strip during the pause in fighting. CTP-ISW's map of Israeli clearing operations shows reported Israeli clearing operations and the claimed furthest Israeli advances. CTP-ISW will not be mapping the shift in Israeli operating areas during the humanitarian pause.

Hamas released a second round of hostages on November 25 after Hamas accused Israel of violating the humanitarian pause agreement and threatened to delay the hostages' release. Hamas and the IDF confirmed that 13 Israeli hostages and four foreign nationals left the Gaza Strip at around 1600 EST on November 25.¹ Their releases come after Hamas media adviser Taher al Nunu accused Israel of violating the pause agreement by failing to supply sufficient aid to the northern Gaza Strip, operating surveillance drones in the closed airspace above the Gaza Strip, shooting and killing Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and releasing Palestinian prisoners in the wrong order from Israeli prisons.² Osama Hamdan—Hamas' senior representative to Lebanon—echoed al Nunu's complaints of alleged Israeli violations during a press conference in Beirut.³ Nunu and Hamdan did not threaten to withdraw from the pause agreement, however. The al Qassem Brigades—the militant wing of Hamas—announced earlier in the day that it would delay the release of the second batch of hostages until Israel adhered to the terms of the deal.⁴ Iranian state media separately claimed that the IDF violated the agreement by “attacking” Gazan civilians on November 24.⁵ Israeli officials have not responded to these allegations, nor have they accused Hamas of violating the deal at the time of this writing.

Hamas remains the only party that has publicly released what it claims are the details of its agreement with Israel.⁶ Israel and Qatar both reported that they reached an agreement with Hamas but did not provide the same level of detail on the terms. CTP-ISW cannot therefore assess whether the parties involved have properly executed the terms of the agreement or whether any changes were made to the agreement during engagements with US, Egyptian, and Qatari mediators on November 25.⁷ The official spokesperson for the Qatari Foreign Affairs Ministry stated that 39 Palestinian prisoners, 13 Israeli hostages, and seven other unspecified foreign nationals would be exchanged in accordance with the agreement on the evening of November 25 after talks with both parties.⁸ The al Qassem Brigades similarly said that it released seven foreign nationals but later revised its statement to say that it only released four.⁹

Hamas claimed that the agreement stipulates that 200 aid trucks will enter all areas of the Gaza Strip daily.¹⁰ The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson detailed the quantity, destination, and contents of aid trucks that entered the Gaza Strip from Egypt on November 24 and 25.¹¹ He stated that 50 of the 200 trucks transported food, water, humanitarian shelter supplies, and medical equipment aid to the northern Gaza Strip on November 25.¹² The IDF said another 200 trucks arrived at unspecified locations in the Gaza Strip on November 24.¹³ The Palestinian



Red Crescent contrastingly said that it only received 196 trucks and transported 61 to the northern Gaza Strip on November 24.¹⁴ The northern Gaza Strip is the focus of Israeli clearing operations against Hamas at this time. The US Special Envoy for Middle East Humanitarian Issues said on November 4 that between 350,000 to 400,000 people remained in the northern Gaza Strip.¹⁵

CTP-ISW did not record verifiable reports of kinetic activity inside the Gaza Strip or reports of attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israel on November 25.

West Bank

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

CTP-ISW recorded nine small arms clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters in the West Bank on November 25. Palestinian media reported that Israeli forces conducted several raids across the West Bank. The Jenin Battalion of the al Quds Brigade claimed an attack on Israeli forces conducting a raid on the outskirts of the Jenin refugee camp.¹⁶ The group claimed that its fighters fired on the Israeli forces and threw IEDs at them.¹⁷ Local West Bank media warned locals prior to the raid of an imminent Israeli operation and instructed civilians to avoid cellphone use and open areas.¹⁸ Unspecified Palestinian fighters separately shot down an Israeli drone over Qabatiya during clashes with Israeli forces.¹⁹ Palestinian fighters in Qabatiya fired on and threw IEDs at Israeli forces.²⁰ Israel did not report on any Israeli raids in the West Bank on November 25, which is contrary to its normal practice.

Palestinian militias are trying to exert greater control over the Palestinian population in the West Bank to facilitate further militia operations against Israeli targets. The Hornets' Nest—a subordinate unit of the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades—issued a statement on November 25 warning West Bank residents that Israel is trying to recruit local informants.²¹ The statement added that Israel offered money to locals for information on the militia.²² The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades also released videos purportedly showing two men confessing to providing Israel with information in exchange for money.²³ Both men were publicly executed in Tulkarm on November 24.²⁴ The fact that the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades felt that it needed to release these statements and videos suggests that the group is concerned about the extent to which it controls the population.

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

Israeli and Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) media suggested that LH conducted 2-3 attacks into northern Israel on November 25. LH media, citing Israeli reports, claimed that LH fired anti-armor guided missiles and drones at unspecified locations in northern Israel. The IDF separately intercepted a drone and



surface-to-air missile entering Israeli territory from Lebanon.²⁵ The IDF reported that it intercepted the missile over the Galilee panhandle, as the missile targeted an Israeli drone.²⁶ The IDF conducted an airstrike on LH infrastructure in southern Lebanon in retaliation for the attempted attack on the Israeli drone.²⁷ No group has claimed responsibility for any of the attacks into Israeli territory on November 25 at the time of publication. The al Qassem Brigades announced on November 23 that LH would observe the pause in fighting brokered between Israel and Hamas.²⁸ The likely LH attacks into northern Israel on November 25 suggest that the al Qassem Brigades either intentionally or unintentionally did not accurately portray LH's position or LH changed its calculus regarding the pause.

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

Iranian-backed Iraqi factions are trying to exploit the Israel-Hamas war to erode US military and political influence in Iraq. Iranian leaders routinely assert that one of their greatest strategic objectives is expelling the United States and its influence from the Middle East. Iranian leaders appear to assign particular priority to removing the United States from Iraq given how important they consider Iraq to the security of the Iranian regime.

- Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba Secretary General Akram al Kaabi released a statement on November 23 calling for a “declaration of war” against the United States and its expulsion from Iraq.²⁹ Kaabi released the statement in response to US fighter jets striking KH sites in Jurf al Saqr, Babil Province, Iraq, on November 22. The United States conducted these strikes in response to repeated KH attacks against US servicemembers in recent weeks. Kaabi described the presence of US combat forces, advisers, and technicians in Iraq as “hostile.”
- Asaib Ahl al Haq Secretary General Qais al Khazali separately stated that US forces have no intention of leaving Iraq and are justifying their presence under the pretext of fighting ISIS during an interview with LH-controlled outlet al Ahed on November 24.³⁰ Khazali stated that US attacks on Iraqi security forces and especially the Popular Mobilization Forces are “unacceptable.” Iranian-backed militias have tried to highlight KH's membership in the PMF in recent days to portray the US airstrikes on KH positions as attacks against a state-affiliated security organization rather than members of the US-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization that is KH. Khazali also emphasized Iraqi resistance groups' support for Palestinians in the Israel-Hamas war.
- Iraqi parliamentarian Alaa al Rikabi claimed on November 25 that former Parliament Speaker Mohammed Halbousi blocked an extraordinary parliamentary session to expel US Ambassador to Iraq Alina Romanowski before he was dismissed on November 14.³¹ The Iraqi Federal Supreme Court issued a ruling to remove Halbousi from parliament on November 14.³² Halbousi, an important Sunni politician and the leader of the Taqqadam Movement, claimed that the Federal Supreme Court's ruling was unconstitutional and was a move by unspecified parties to create political divisions within society.³³ Rikabi's November 25 claim supports CTP-ISW's hypothesis that Halbousi was removed from his post as part of political efforts to reduce the US presence in Iraq.



Iran and its Axis of Resistance appear to be continuing to threaten Israeli-affiliated commercial shipping.

- Likely Houthi fighters seized an Israeli-owned, Malta-flagged freighter transiting the Red Sea on November 25. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations reported that “Yemeni authorities” forced a ship near al Hudaydah, Yemen, to “alter course” on November 25.³⁴ The ship is believed to be the Israeli-owned, Malta-flagged Zim Luanda. The Houthi movement has not officially claimed responsibility for the attack. Houthi spokesperson Yahya Saree wrote “ZIM” in a one-word post on X (Twitter) on November 25, however.³⁵ Houthi members have used one-word posts to indicate their responsibility for attacks on Israeli targets in recent weeks, however. Houthi Political Bureau member Hizam al Asad previously wrote the Israeli city “Eilat” in a post on X on October 27—the same day that the Houthi movement conducted a drone attack targeting southern Israel.³⁶ At least two unspecified drones originating from the “Red Sea area” struck Egyptian territory near Taba, a resort town adjacent to Eilat, on October 27.³⁷ The November 25 seizure follows the Houthi’s November 23 warning that it will continue attacks against Israeli ships and interests until Israel’s “aggression against Gaza stops.”³⁸ The seizure also follows Emirati reporting on November 23 that Tehran ordered its proxies in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen to abide by the temporary pause in fighting between Israel and Hamas.³⁹ Houthi Naval Forces Chief of Staff Mansur al Saadi has received extensive training from Iran, and the US Treasury Department sanctioned him in March 2021 for planning attacks against international shipping in the Red Sea.⁴⁰
- The IRGC may have conducted a one-way drone attack on an Israeli-owned, Malta-flagged freighter in the Persian Gulf on November 24. A suspected Iranian Shahed-136 one-way attack drone struck the CMA CGM Symi.⁴¹ The Associated Press reported on November 25 that US officials suspect the IRGC of conducting the attack. LH-affiliated al Mayadeen, citing informed sources, reported the attack on November 25.⁴² Iranian state media recirculated al Mayadeen’s reporting of the attack.⁴³ Iranian officials and media have not denied Iranian involvement in the attack at the time of writing.
- Houthi fighters recently hijacked an Israeli-owned, Japanese-operated freighter transiting the Red Sea on November 19.⁴⁴ Houthi fighters fast-roped onto the deck of the *Galaxy Leader* from a helicopter and took 25 crew members hostage.⁴⁵ The Israeli government said that the Houthis hijacked the ship under Iranian “guidance.”⁴⁶

Iranian Deputy Parliament Speaker Mojtaba Zonnour warned on November 25 that Iran can inspect and stop ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz if they jeopardize Iranian national security.⁴⁷ It is unclear whether Zonnour made this warning in response to the suspected IRGC attack on the Israeli-owned freighter in the Persian Gulf on November 24. Zonnour previously served as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s deputy representative to the IRGC between 2008-2011.⁴⁸

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—did not claim any attacks against US forces in Iraq or Syria on November 25. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has not claimed any attacks since the Israel-Hamas pause in fighting went into effect. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq and



its affiliated groups claimed 74 attacks against US forces in the Middle East between October 18 and November 23.⁴⁹

Iranian Tourism and Cultural Heritage Minister and former IRGC official Ezzatollah Zarghami stated that he previously visited Hamas tunnels in the Gaza Strip and taught Hamas fighters how to use the Iranian-made Fajr-3 rocket during an interview with Iranian state television on November 20.⁵⁰ Zarghami stated that he traveled to the Gaza Strip as a “production manager” of the Fajr-3 rocket. Zarghami was a member of the IRGC in the 1980s and served as the IRGC Radio Program head between 1982 and 1986.⁵¹ He served as the president of the state-controlled outlet IRIB between 2004 and 2014 and has served as Iran’s tourism minister since August 2021.⁵²



- ¹ <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1728519708742201461> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/29228>
- ² <https://t.me/hamasps/17955>
- ³ <https://t.me/hamasps/17961> ; <https://t.me/QudsN/334916>
- ⁴ <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/531>
- ⁵ <https://www.irna dot ir/news/85301251/%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B2%DA%AF%D8%B4%D8%AA-%D8%A2%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D9%87-%D8%B1%DA%98%DB%8C%D9%85-%D8%B5%D9%87%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA%DB%8C-%D8%A2%D8%AA%D8%B4-%D8%A8%D8%B3-%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D9%86%D9%82%D8%B6-%DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%AF>
- ⁶ <https://t.me/hamasps/17926>
- ⁷ <https://twitter.com/majedalansari/status/1728487715421749552>
- ⁸ https://twitter.com/MofaQatar_AR/status/1728498002891813374
- ⁹ <https://t.me/qassambrigades/29228> ; <https://t.me/hamasps/17966>
- ¹⁰ <https://t.me/hamasps/17926>
- ¹¹ <https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1728392968631992642> ; <https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1728384051503923530> ; <https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1728343863700439068/history> ;
- ¹² <https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1728392968631992642>
- ¹³ <https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1728384051503923530>
- ¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/PalestineRCS/status/1728322954495217715>
- ¹⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-special-envoy-no-record-hamas-blocking-or-seizing-aid-2023-11-04/>
- ¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/ShehabAgency/status/1728454095889956919> ; <https://t.me/HebronNewss/31033> ; <https://t.me/sarayajneen/1153>
- ¹⁷ <https://t.me/HebronNewss/31033> ; <https://twitter.com/ShehabAgency/status/1728454095889956919>
- ¹⁸ <https://t.me/beitlahiaNews/8454>
- ¹⁹ https://t.me/C_Military1/40263 ; <https://t.me/newpress1/59700>
- ²⁰ <https://twitter.com/ShehabAgency/status/1728312574813360152> ; <https://t.me/newpress1/59702>
- ²¹ <https://t.me/kataipshohdaaalaqsa/838>
- ²² <https://t.me/kataipshohdaaalaqsa/838>
- ²³ <https://twitter.com/SbintQtr/status/1728405621261705420> ; <https://twitter.com/SbintQtr/status/1723504876397756554>
- ²⁴ *GRAPHIC* <https://t.me/beitlahiaNews/8320> ; *GRAPHIC* <https://t.me/beitlahiaNews/8328> ; *GRAPHIC* <https://twitter.com/JoeTruzman/status/1728189164016079191> ; *GRAPHIC* https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/40587
- ²⁵ <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1728285531912671604> ; <https://t.me/newpress1/59693>
- ²⁶ <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1728285531912671604> ; <https://twitter.com/JoeTruzman/status/1728277181087060301> ; <https://t.me/almanarnews/137796>
- ²⁷ <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1728285531912671604>
- ²⁸ <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/525>
- ²⁹ https://twitter.com/Akram_Alkabee/status/1727686025651130648
- ³⁰ <https://www.presstv dot ir/Detail/2023/11/25/715239/Iraqi-resistance-group-Qais-al-Khazali-US-occupation-forces-Daesh>
- ³¹ <https://shafaq dot com/ar/%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/%D9%85%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%AC-%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%B6-%D8%B9%D9%82%D8%AF-%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%A9->



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%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9

³² <https://www.iraqfsc dot iq/news.5066/>

³³ <https://almadapaper dot net/view.php?cat=301402>

³⁴ https://twitter.com/UK_MTO/status/1728388382978384221

³⁵ <https://twitter.com/army21ye/status/1728421437570998366>

³⁶ <https://twitter.com/hezamalasad/status/1717986495808544969>

³⁷ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-27-2023>

³⁸ https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-11-22-23/h_6b422f2abd54d7a1e3c9c9321c1dd103

³⁹ <https://t dot co/lZ4ZReu0Ur>

⁴⁰ <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0043>

⁴¹ <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-hamas-ship-drone-attack-symi-39929cae42a191b2f242896a053123a7>

⁴² <https://www.almayadeen dot net/news/politics/%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86--%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%81-%D8%B3%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D9%82%D8%A8>

⁴³ <https://defapress dot ir/fa/news/633243 ;>

<https://www.farsnews dot ir/news/14020904000221>

⁴⁴ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/amp/rcna125883>

⁴⁵ <https://apnews.com/article/israel-houthi-rebels-hijacked-ship-red-sea-dc9b6448690bcf5c70a0baf7c7c34b09>

⁴⁶ <https://twitter.com/IsraeliPM/status/1726248918835728671>

⁴⁷ <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202311252689 ;>

<https://www.eghtesadnews dot com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C-57/612098-%D9%86%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%A8-%D8%B1%D8%A6%DB%8C%D8%B3-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%B3%DB%8C-%DA%A9%D8%B4%D8%AA%DB%8C-%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D9%86%DA%AF%D9%87-%D9%87%D8%B1%D9%85%D8%B2-%D8%AD%D9%82-%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA>

⁴⁸ <https://facesofcrime dot org/profile/103/mojtaba-zolnour/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-november-24-2023>

⁵⁰ <https://www.dailywire.com/news/ex-irgc-general-i-went-inside-hamas-tunnels-to-teach-them-how-to-use-iranian-rockets>

⁵¹ <https://facesofcrime dot org/profile/176/ezzatollah-zarghami/>

⁵² <https://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/sanctioned-person/zarghami-ezzatollah>