

# Iran Update



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**Information Cutoff: December 2, 2024, 2:00 pm ET**

*The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) publish the Iran Update, which provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. 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.*

*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.*

**Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have reportedly deployed to northern Syria to help defend the Bashar al Assad regime against Syrian opposition forces.**[1] Kataib Hezbollah, Badr Organization, and Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba fighters have deployed from Iraq to northern Syria over the past day, according to a Syrian Arab Army (SAA) source and two Iraqi security sources speaking to Reuters on December 2.[2] The SAA source told Reuters that dozens of Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) fighters crossed into Syria via the Albu Kamal border crossing overnight on December 1 and 2.[3] The PMF is an Iraqi state security service that includes a large number of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias.[4] The PMF, on paper, reports directly to the Iraqi prime minister, but in reality, many of the militias that comprise the PMF answer to Iran.[5] Social media users published images on December 1 purporting to show Iranian-backed Iraqi fighters heading toward Syria.[6] A local Syrian source denied on December 2 that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias entered Syria from Iraq and instead claimed that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias redeployed from Palmyra in central Syria and Deir ez Zor in eastern Syria to northern Syria.[7] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias may redeploy from other areas in Syria to the north given that these militias have long operated in Syria.

**Hezbollah does not appear willing to commit fighters to assist its pro-regime allies in northern Syria, probably as a result of the severe losses it has suffered in Lebanon.** Hezbollah has not yet deployed fighters to Syria to support the Syrian regime. An unspecified Hezbollah spokesperson told *Newsweek* on December 2 that the SAA does not need Hezbollah fighters to assist in the defense of territory seized by Syrian opposition forces.[8] Hezbollah fighters previously deployed thousands of fighters in defense of Assad in 2011 and Hezbollah was an extremely important element of the pro-regime forces.[9] Decisively supporting regime forces would likely require Hezbollah to

organize a large-scale re-deployment of fighters to Syria, as numerous Hezbollah fighters left Syria to join the southern front in Lebanon in the past few months.[10]

**It is not clear that Hezbollah can currently support a deployment of this size, given post-war commitments to reconstitute its forces.** Hezbollah is currently regenerating and reorganizing its forces after a nearly two-month Israeli campaign in southern Lebanon that has severely degraded its command-and-control networks, communications, and weapons stockpiles.[11] Regeneration and reorganization take place out of contact with enemy forces and cannot be undertaken at the same time as large-scale deployments. Regeneration and reorganization would need to occur before any forces can be deployed as units. It is possible, however, that Hezbollah could choose to deploy individuals to Syria to advise regime forces. The pressure on Hezbollah to defend Syrian territory from rebel advances is greater given that a rebel advance towards Hama begins to threaten Hezbollah's access to Iranian materiel and equipment through its ground line of communication in Homs Province. It does not appear that pro-regime forces, including Iran, have asked Hezbollah to join in on defensive efforts, however.[12]

**Iran is coordinating with Syria and Russia to counter the rebel offensive in Syria.** Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian discussed countering “the spread of terrorism” in a telephone conversation with President Bashar al Assad on December 2.[13] Assad blamed the United States and Israel for their interference in the region. Iranian Parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf also reiterated Iran's support for Syria in a phone call with Syrian counterpart Hammouda Sabbagh on December 2.[14] Pezeshkian reemphasized regional cohesion to counter “terrorism” in Syria in separate calls with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani on December 2.[15]

**Iran and Turkey continue to hold different desired political goals in Syria, which could cause increased friction as the Syrian opposition offensive continues.** Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi and Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Hakan Fidan both agreed on the preservation of Syria's territorial sovereignty and returning to the Astana process in a joint press conference in Ankara on December 2.[16] Araghchi acknowledged the “differences of opinion” between Iran and Turkey and emphasized Iran's support for Assad's regime.[17] Fidan said that Turkey believes Assad is ignoring the “legitimate demands” of the Syrian opposition.[18] Turkey's “legitimate demands” would presumably include some role for Turkey's allies in Syria because a total Assad takeover of the country, as Assad and Iran desire, would trigger massive refugee flows north towards Turkey.[19] Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that Turkey will prioritize its national security on December 2.[20] Erdogan almost certainly believes that the collapse of Turkish allies would endanger Turkish national security by increasing refugee flows as well as the threat from Kurdish militants.

**Syrian opposition forces appear to be slowing their advance into regime-controlled areas of northwest Syria after encountering Syrian Arab Army (SAA) defensive lines north of Hama City.** Fateh Mubin—a joint operations room including Hayat Tahrir al Sham and several other armed opposition factions leading the offensive—did not claim to seize additional towns in northwest Syria on December 2. The Syrian Defense Minister announced on December 1 that it sent large reinforcements to Hama's northern countryside to bolster the SAA's defensive operations in the

area.[21] Regime forces reportedly deployed from eastern Hama province near Rusafa to Hama City on December 2, demonstrating that the regime continues to reinforce its defensive lines there.[22] The SAA also deployed forces on the left bank of the Orontes River near Hama City on December 1 and 2 after opposition forces initially claimed to seize towns in the area.[23] Fateh Mubin’s spokesperson said that opposition forces were in control of seven unspecified towns in northern Hama and were approaching regime forces from multiple axes on December 2, however.[24] Idlib-based opposition forces also claimed likely drone attacks targeting regime forces, command centers, and other operationally significant assets on December 2.[25] These attacks may reflect the increased ground-based resistance that opposition forces are facing in Hama. The SAA’s defense of northern Hama is the first effective defense that pro-regime forces have mounted against Syrian opposition forces since the offensive began on November 27.

**The Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) is similarly slowing its advance after accomplishing its main goal of seizing Tel Rifat, north of Aleppo, on December 1.**[26] The SNA claimed to seize 14 towns north of Aleppo, compared to the more than 30 sites the force seized the day prior.[27] Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and SNA leaders reportedly negotiated a deal to allow civilians and fighters to evacuate east to SDF territory from Tel Rifat and Sheikh Maqsoud, a Kurdish neighborhood of eastern Aleppo.[28] SDF leader Mazloum Abdi confirmed on December 1 that locals were evacuating Tel Rifat through an “opening a humanitarian corridor.”[29] It remains unclear at this time the extent to which the SNA and Idlib-based opposition groups are coordinating their attacks targeting the Syrian regime. Social media users circulated footage on December 1 of SNA and HTS fighters joining convoys near the Aleppo International Airport, reportedly to launch an operation northeast of Aleppo City.[30]

**A local Syrian source suggested that the SDF may launch an offensive to seize Syrian regime-controlled territory in Deir ez Zor Province.**[31] The Deir ez Zor Military Council—an Arab-majority militia within the SDF—reportedly mobilized locals from seven villages on the left bank of the Euphrates River.[32] These seven villages are the only areas east of the Euphrates that the regime controls, making it a strategic holding for the regime and its allies. Both Russia and Iranian-backed militias maintain positions in these seven towns.[33] Iranian-backed militias have repeatedly launched rockets targeting US forces stationed nearby from these seven villages.[34] CTP-ISW is monitoring early rumors about possible clashes between SDF fighters and unspecified militias in Deir ez Zor.[35]

Russian and Syrian regime forces continued a limited airstrike campaign in opposition-occupied areas of northwest Syria on December 2. Pro-regime forces struck sites across Idlib and Aleppo governorates, including hospitals in Idlib.[36] The Syrian Defense Ministry claimed that the air and artillery strikes destroyed five opposition command centers and seven weapons and ammunition depots.[37] The regime said that airstrikes killed at least 400 opposition fighters.[38]

**The United States and France reportedly warned Israel that it is violating the terms of the ceasefire, according to Israeli media.** Israeli media reported on December 2 that senior French and US officials, including US Special Envoy Amos Hochstein, told their Israeli counterparts that Israel was violating terms of the ceasefire agreement by conducting military activities in Lebanese territory and failing to report them to the designated oversight mechanism.[39] The IDF has conducted numerous strikes into Lebanese territory since the ceasefire went into effect on November 27 to thwart

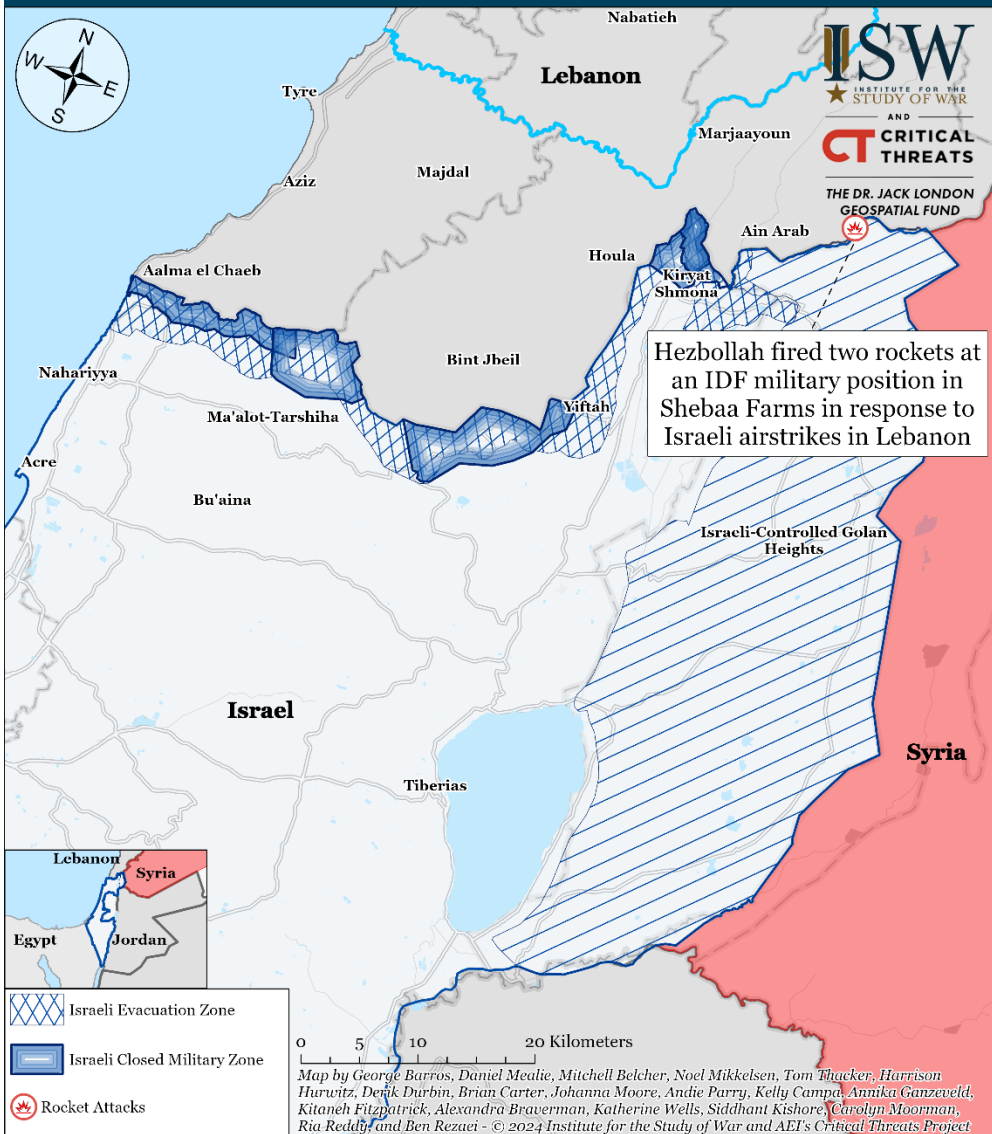
what it deemed as Hezbollah's violations of the ceasefire agreement.[40] Israel and Lebanon are both required to report any possible violations of their obligations to both UNIFIL and the oversight mechanism, according to leaked copies of the agreement published by Israeli Army Radio.[41]

Hezbollah fired two rockets at an IDF border position as a "warning" on December 2 in response to what Hezbollah described as Israeli ceasefire violations.[42] The rockets fell in open areas in the Israeli-controlled Shebaa Farms.[43] Hezbollah has long maintained that Shebaa Farms is Lebanese territory and it has targeted the area repeatedly since October 2023.[44] Hezbollah said in a statement that the "concerned authorities" that reviewed Israel's violations did not stop them from occurring."[45] This incident was Hezbollah's first attack into Israeli territory since the ceasefire went into effect. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to respond "with force" to Hezbollah's attack and the IDF announced that it began to strike Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.[46] Hezbollah has not conducted any further attacks into Israeli territory at this time.

Israel retains the "inherent right to self-defense" under the current ceasefire agreement and Israel has justified its military activity in Lebanon since the ceasefire as a response to "immediate" Hezbollah threats to Israel.[47] The IDF also struck a rocket launcher at a Hezbollah site near Sidon on November 28 classified as a "non-immediate" threat that the IDF needed to neutralize.[48] This action is reportedly guaranteed by the US, which pledged to support Israel's right to respond to threats in a side letter.[49]

# Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

As of December 2, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



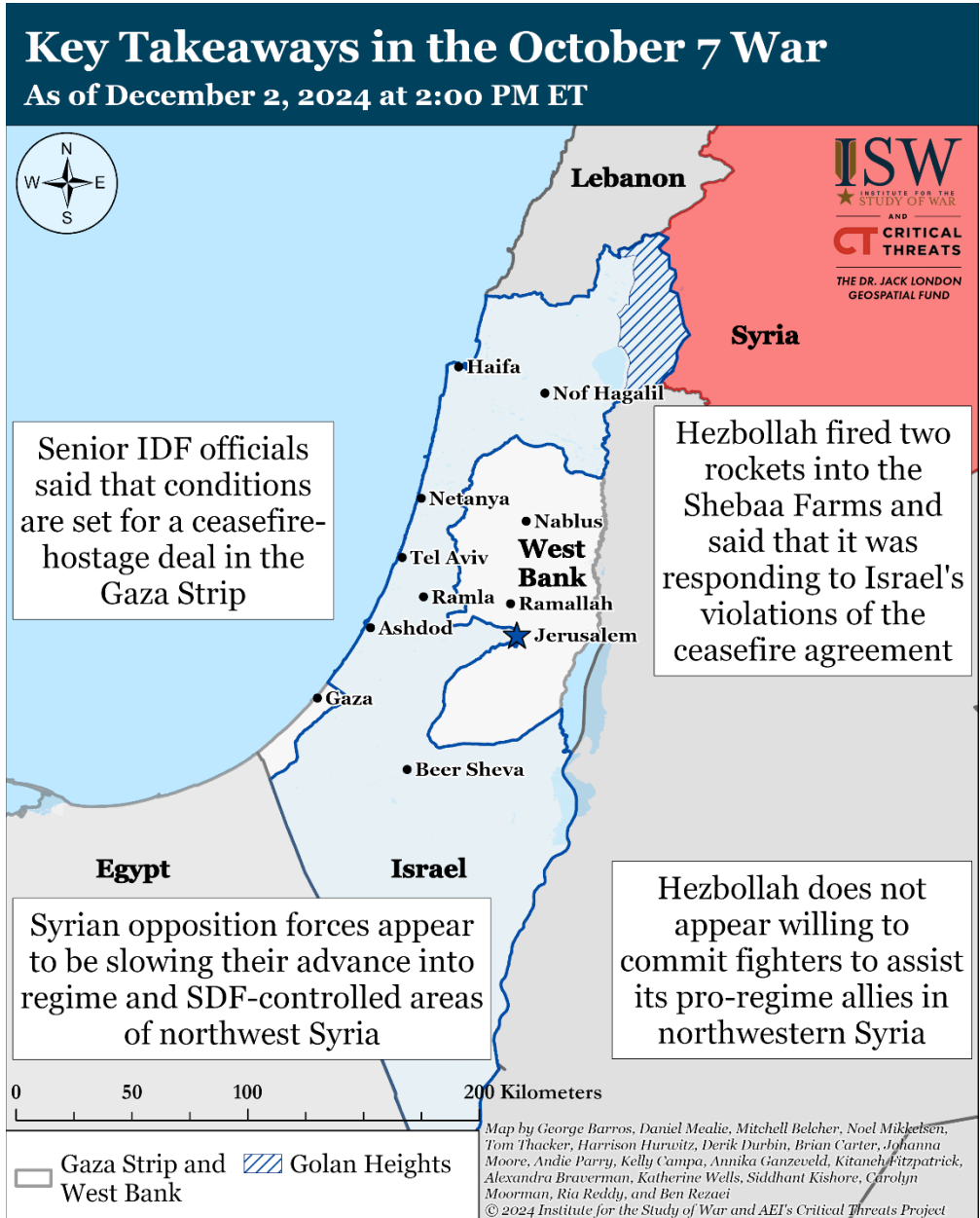
**Senior IDF officials have recommended that Israel propose a temporary ceasefire-hostage deal in response to Hamas' perceived willingness to concede on some of its maximalist ceasefire demands.[50]** Senior IDF officials told Israeli media on December 2 that several factors, including the ceasefire in Lebanon, may pressure Hamas to accept a deal. Hamas expressed its readiness to resume negotiations after the ceasefire began in Lebanon.[51] A senior Israeli cabinet minister reported on November 29 that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is also interested in a partial ceasefire-hostage deal to capitalize on Hamas' "weaker position" after the ceasefire in Lebanon.[52] Egyptian officials discussed a new ceasefire-hostage proposal with Hamas and Israeli officials during the most recent round of negotiations in Cairo that began on November 29.[53]

**Hamas and Fatah have made “significant progress” towards the formation of a civilian committee to handle post-war governance in the Gaza Strip.**[54] A senior Hamas official told Al Araby al Jadeed on December 2 that Hamas and Fatah had solved major differences during meetings in Cairo, including the management of relief and construction funds.[55] The official added that Hamas and Fatah agreed that unidentified donors would independently supervise the funds.[56] Hamas will almost certainly attempt to gain control over an independent reconstruction agency. Hamas control--or attempts to control--an independent reconstruction agency would make it more difficult to secure donor funding.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Iranian-backed Support to Syria:** Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have reportedly deployed to northern Syria to help defend the Bashar al Assad regime against Syrian opposition forces.
- **Hezbollah Support to Syria:** It is not clear that Hezbollah can currently support a deployment of this size, given postwar commitments to reconstitute its forces. Hezbollah is regenerating and reorganizing its forces after a nearly two-month Israeli campaign in southern Lebanon that has severely degraded its command-and-control networks, communications, and weapons stockpiles. Regeneration and reorganization would need to occur before any forces can be deployed as units. It is possible, however, that Hezbollah could choose to deploy individuals to Syria to advise regime forces.
- **Iranian Diplomatic Responses:** Iran is coordinating with Syria and Russia to counter the rebel offensive in Syria. Iran and Turkey continue to hold different desired political goals in Syria, which could cause increased friction as the Syrian opposition offensive continues.
- **Syrian Opposition Operations:** Syrian opposition forces appear to be slowing their advance into regime-controlled areas of northwest Syria after encountering Syrian Arab Army (SAA) defensive lines north of Hama City. The Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) is similarly slowing its advance after accomplishing its main goal of seizing Tel Rifat, north of Aleppo, on December 1.
- **US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces:** A local Syrian source suggested that the SDF may launch an offensive to seize Syrian regime-controlled territory in Deir ez Zor Province. The Deir ez Zor Military Council—an Arab-majority militia within the SDF—reportedly mobilized locals from seven villages on the left bank of the Euphrates River. These seven villages are the only areas east of the Euphrates that the regime controls, making it a strategic holding for the regime and its allies
- **Lebanon Ceasefire:** The United States and France reportedly warned Israel that it is violating the terms of the ceasefire, according to Israeli media. The IDF has conducted numerous strikes into Lebanese territory since the ceasefire went into effect. Hezbollah fired two rockets at an IDF border position as a “warning” on December 2 in response to what Hezbollah described as Israeli ceasefire violations.

- Gaza Strip Ceasefire:** Senior IDF officials have recommended that Israel propose a temporary ceasefire-hostage deal in response to Hamas' perceived willingness to concede on some of its maximalist ceasefire demands.



## **Gaza Strip:**

### **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 162nd Division continued clearing operations in the northern Gaza Strip on December 2.** The 900th Infantry Brigade killed Palestinian militia fighters and destroyed IEDs in Jabalia and Beit Lahia.[57] Israeli forces located multiple buildings that stored large quantities of weapons in Beit Lahia.[58] A Palestinian journalist reported Israeli gunfire in Saftawi, northern Gaza Strip on December 1.[59] The Mujahideen Brigades mortared Israeli personnel west of Saftawi on December 2.[60]

Israeli forces released video footage showing Palestinian fighters planting house-borne improvised explosive devices in two buildings in Beit Lahia. It appears that the fighters made a small hole in the corner of a room before patching the hole after inserting the IED.[61] It is not clear when the video was taken.

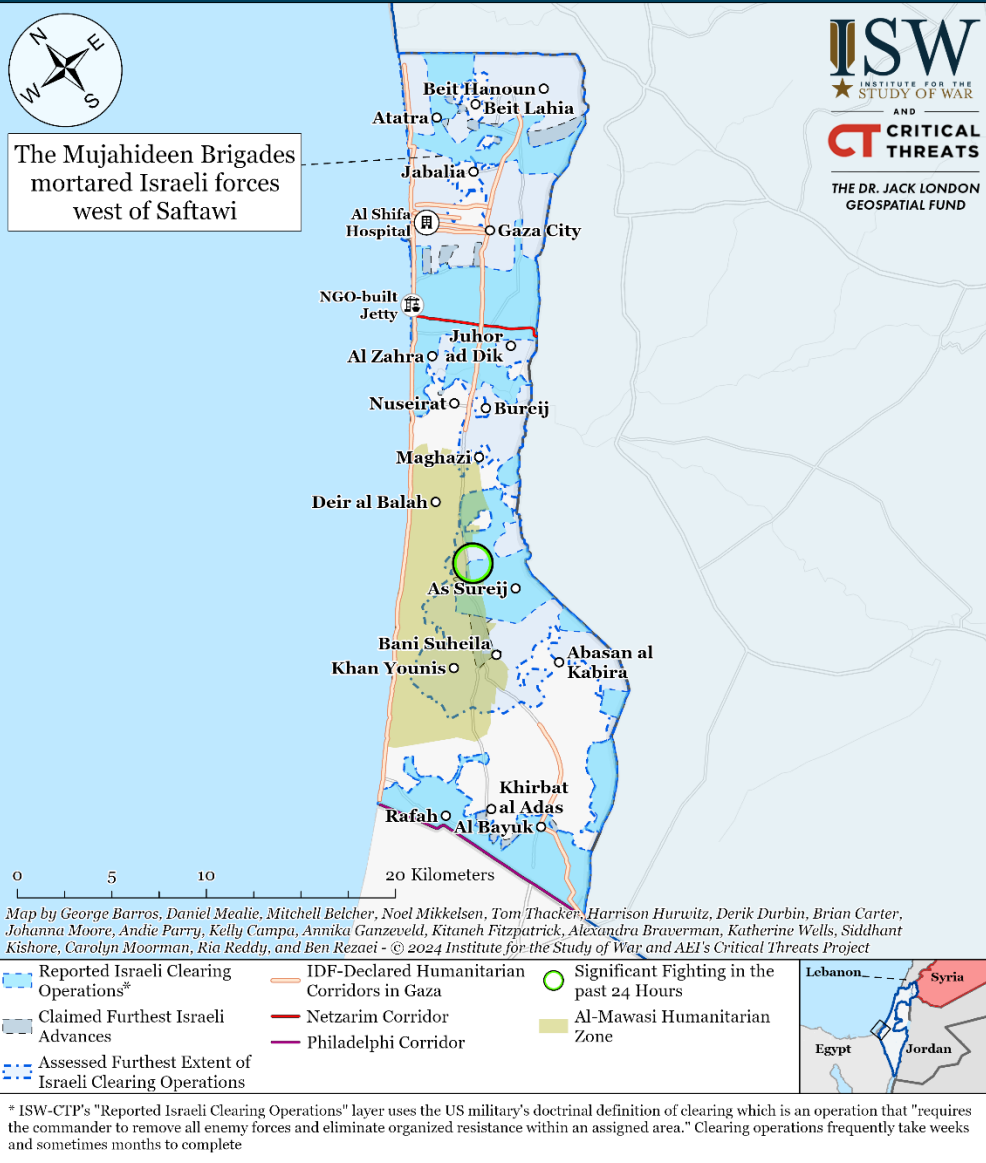
**IDF spokesperson Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani said that the IDF's ground expansion along the Netzarim Corridor is for operational reasons and can be "taken down within a day."**[62] The *New York Times* reported on December 2 that the IDF had built or "expanded" 12 of its 19 bases along the Netzarim Corridor since early September 2024. The *New York Times* did not clarify its use of "expanded." CTP-ISW previously noted that the IDF had expanded the Netzarim Corridor to a width of seven to eight kilometers and built semi-permanent infrastructure there on November 11.[63]

**The IDF 143rd Division continued operations near Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on December 1.** A Palestinian journalist reported gunfire from vehicles west of Rafah on December 1.[64]



# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of December 2, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



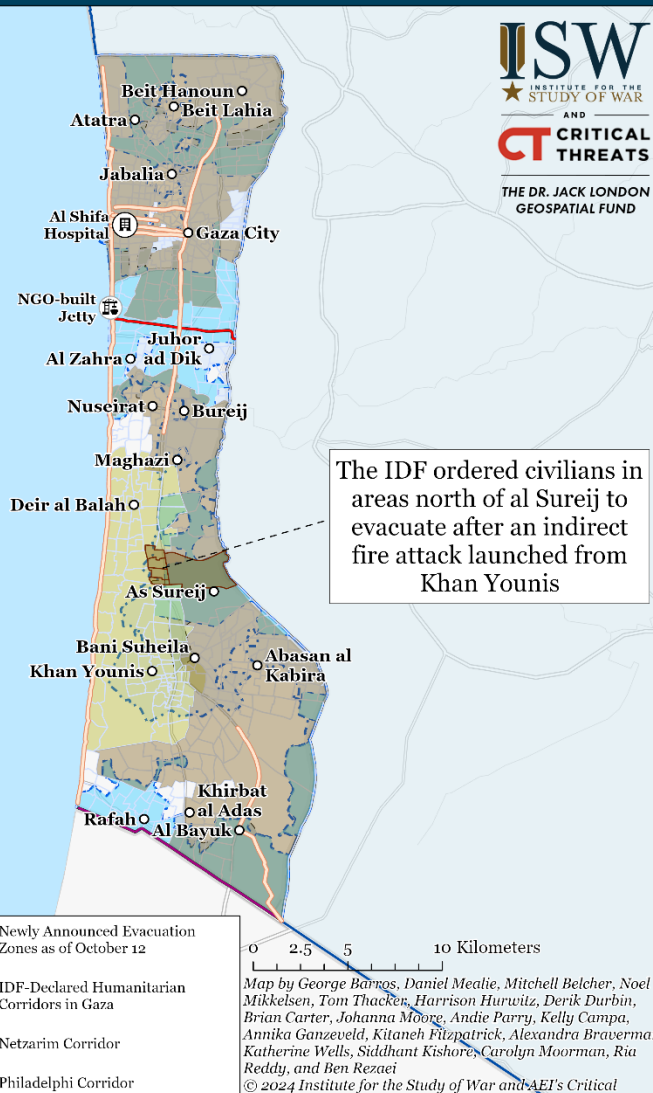
**The IDF issued evacuation orders for areas of Khan Younis on December 2.[65]** The IDF urged Palestinian civilians in areas north of as Sureij to evacuate after militias fired rockets from the area targeting Israel. The IDF intercepted a rocket launched from Khan Younis earlier in the day.[66]

# Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip

## As of December 2, 2023 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)



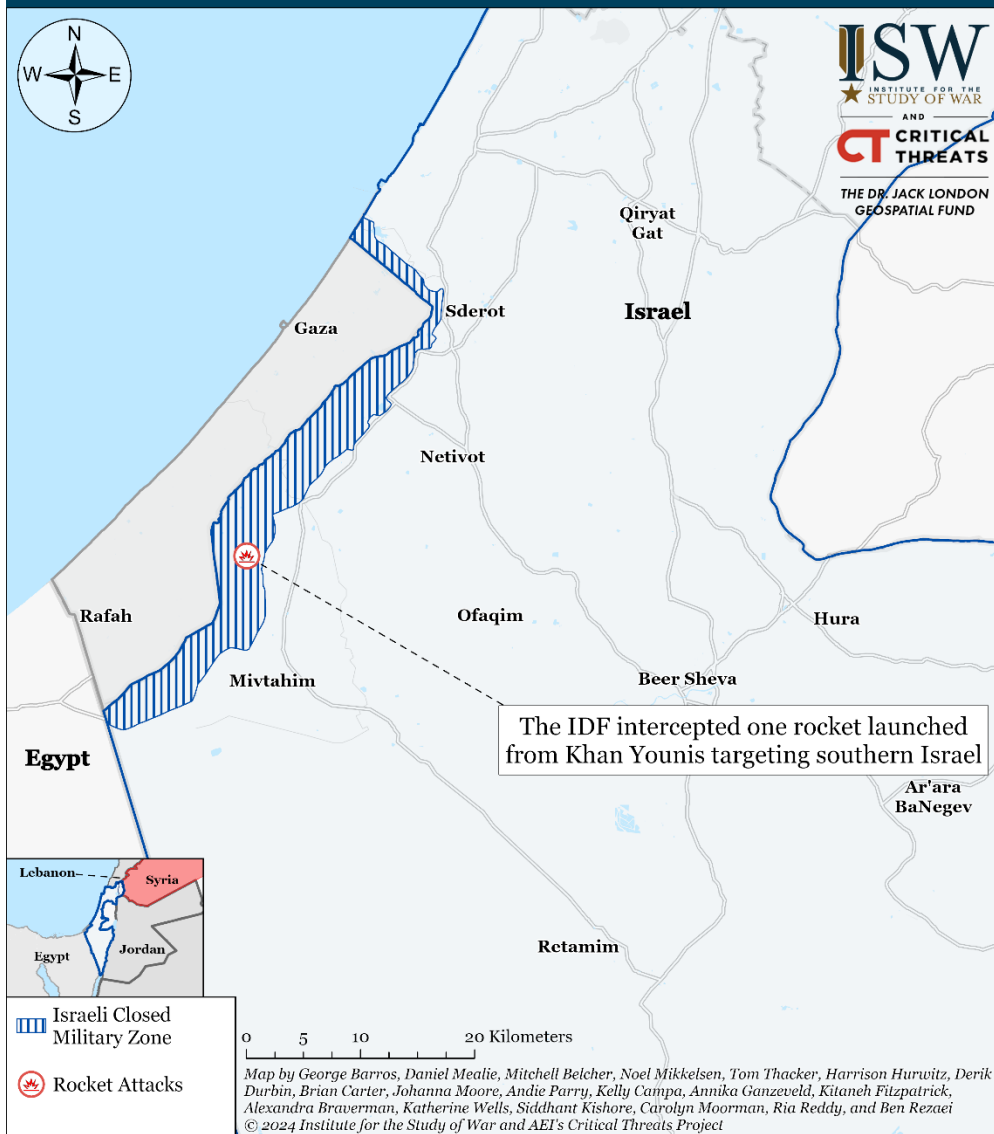
The IDF ordered civilians in areas north of al Sureij to evacuate after an indirect fire attack launched from Khan Younis



\* 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

# Attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip

As of December 2, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



**The IDF 143rd Division continued operations near Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on December 1.** A Palestinian journalist reported gunfire from vehicles west of Rafah on December 1.[67]

**IDF Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Amir Baram met with brigade and battalion commanders in the IDF 162nd, 99th, and 143rd Divisions during a battlefield circulation.**[68] These Divisions are deployed to the northern, central, and southern Gaza Strip, respectively.[69] Baram also received a briefing on offensive operations occurring in Jabalia and Rafah.[70] The 162nd Division launched a new clearing operation in Jabalia on October 6.[71] Israeli forces have operated in Rafah since May 2024.[72]

## West Bank

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

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

**Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fired small arms targeting “military equipment” near Ram-on, Israel, on December 2.**<sup>[73]</sup> Ram-on is a town in Israel but just north of the border fence near Jenin.

## Northern Israel and Lebanon

### **Lebanese Hezbollah objectives:**

- End Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip
- Survive the October 7 War as a capable political and military organization with control over Lebanon

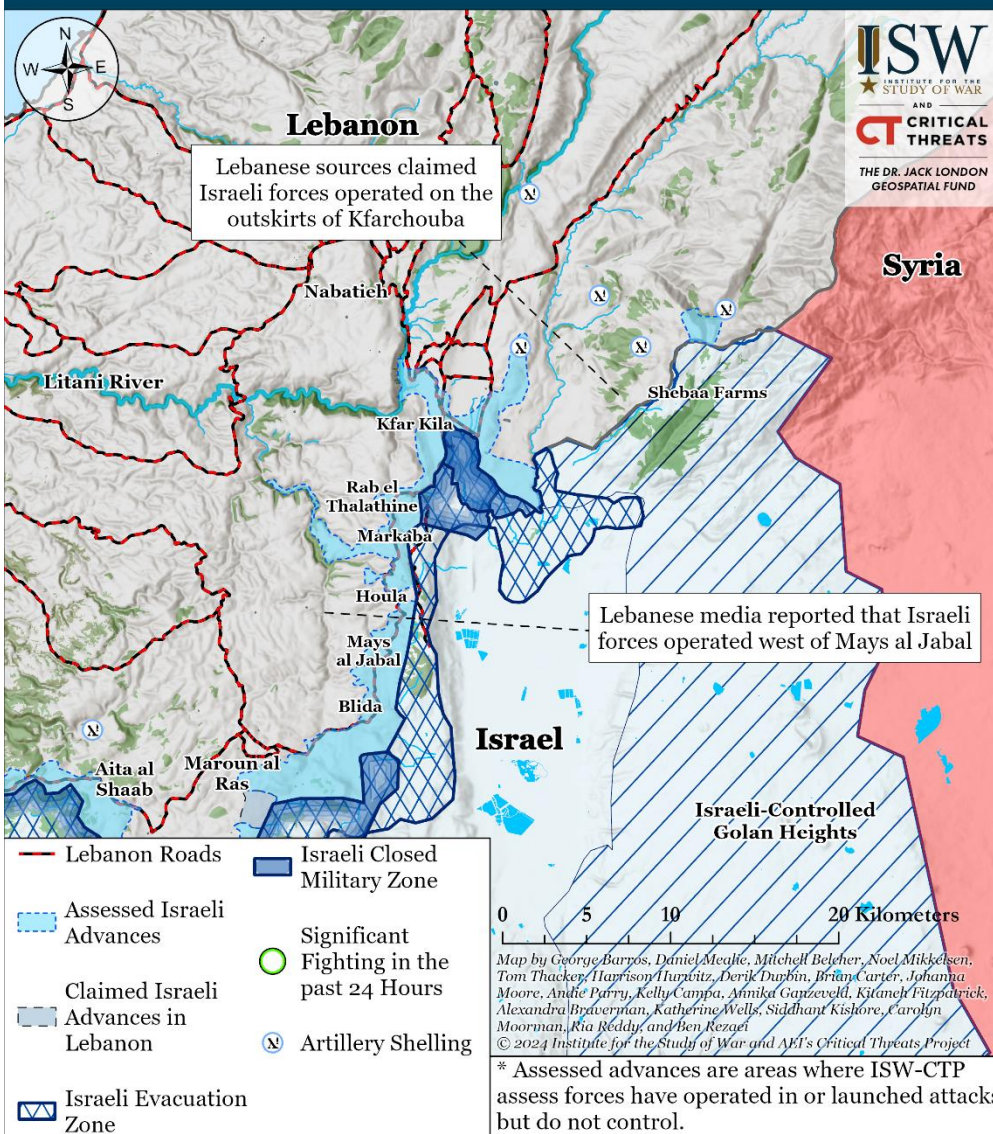
**Lebanese media reported that Israeli forces operated in Mays al Jabal, southeastern Lebanon, on December 2.**<sup>[74]</sup> Lebanese media reported that Israeli forces advanced in Mays al Jabal towards Chaqra, southeastern Lebanon and that the IDF established positions and built berms along the Mays al Jabal-Chaqra road.<sup>[75]</sup> The Israeli forces reportedly blocked off the road that connects the two towns before withdrawing from the area.<sup>[76]</sup> Local sources stated that UNIFIL peacekeepers have partially reopened the road.<sup>[77]</sup>

**Israeli forces conducted operations in Kfarchouba, southeastern Lebanon, on December 2.**<sup>[78]</sup> Lebanese media reported that Israeli forces conducted clearing operations on the outskirts of Kfarchouba, southeastern Lebanon.<sup>[79]</sup> Lebanese media reported that Israeli infantry and armor operating in Shanouh Farm on the outskirts of Kfarchouba.<sup>[80]</sup>

**The IDF 98th Division engaged Hezbollah fighters in Khiam on December 1.** The IDF 35th Paratroopers fired at and killed several armed Hezbollah fighters near a church in central Khiam.<sup>[81]</sup> The IDF said the fighters killed were active in Hezbollah’s ground defense, anti-tank, and artillery units in the Khiam sector.<sup>[82]</sup> Israeli forces located a tunnel shaft used to store weapons within the church.<sup>[83]</sup>

Lebanese media sources reported that Israeli personnel and armor withdrew from Khiam’s eastern and southern neighborhoods towards the al Wata area, east of Khiam, on December 2.<sup>[84]</sup> Israeli forces have been operating in Khiam since November 3 and reportedly continued operations after the ceasefire was enacted.<sup>[85]</sup>

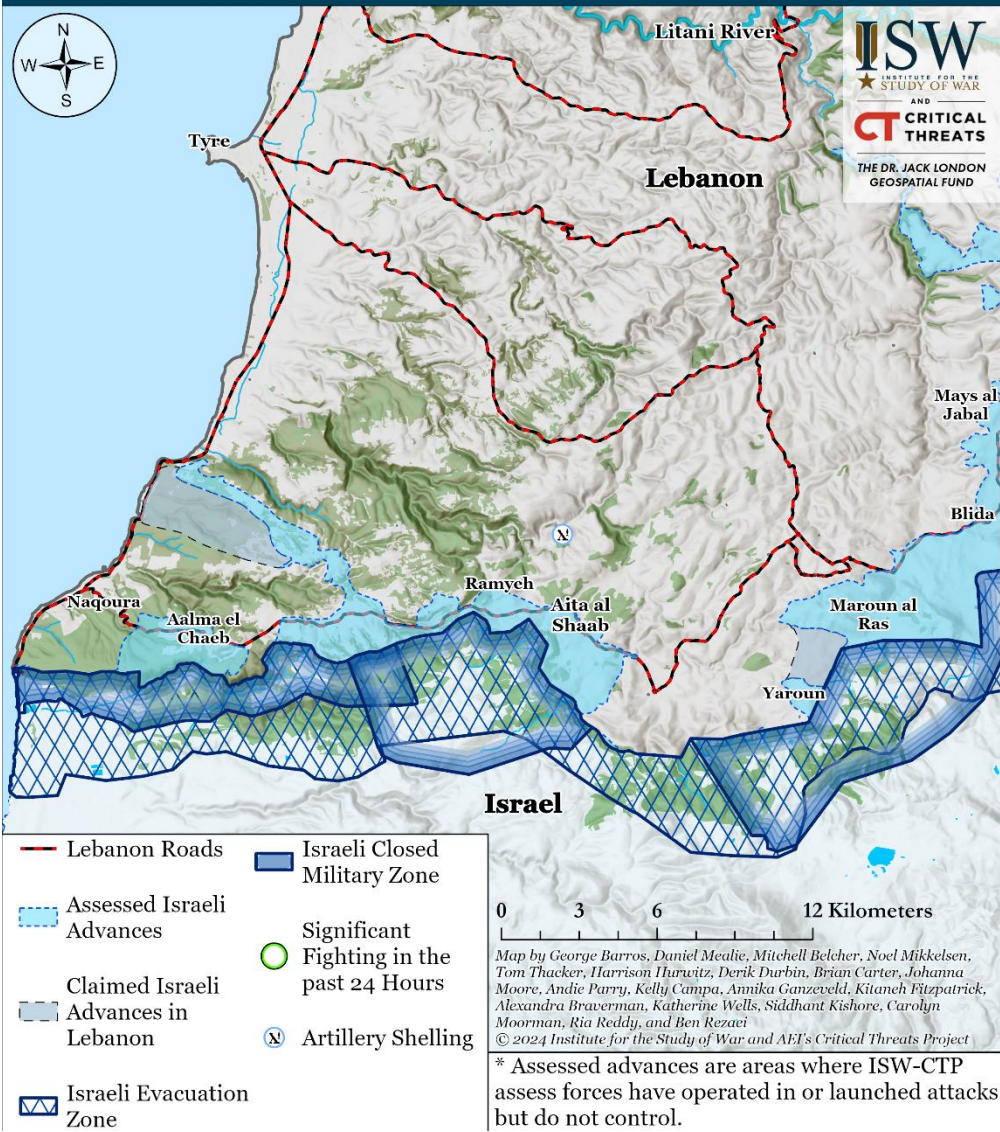
# Reported Israeli Operations in the Eastern Sector As of December 2, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



**Lebanese media reported that Israeli forces operated in Aitaroun, south-central Lebanon, on December 2.[86]** Local media claimed that Israeli forces and armor operated in Aitaroun, southwestern Lebanon.[87]

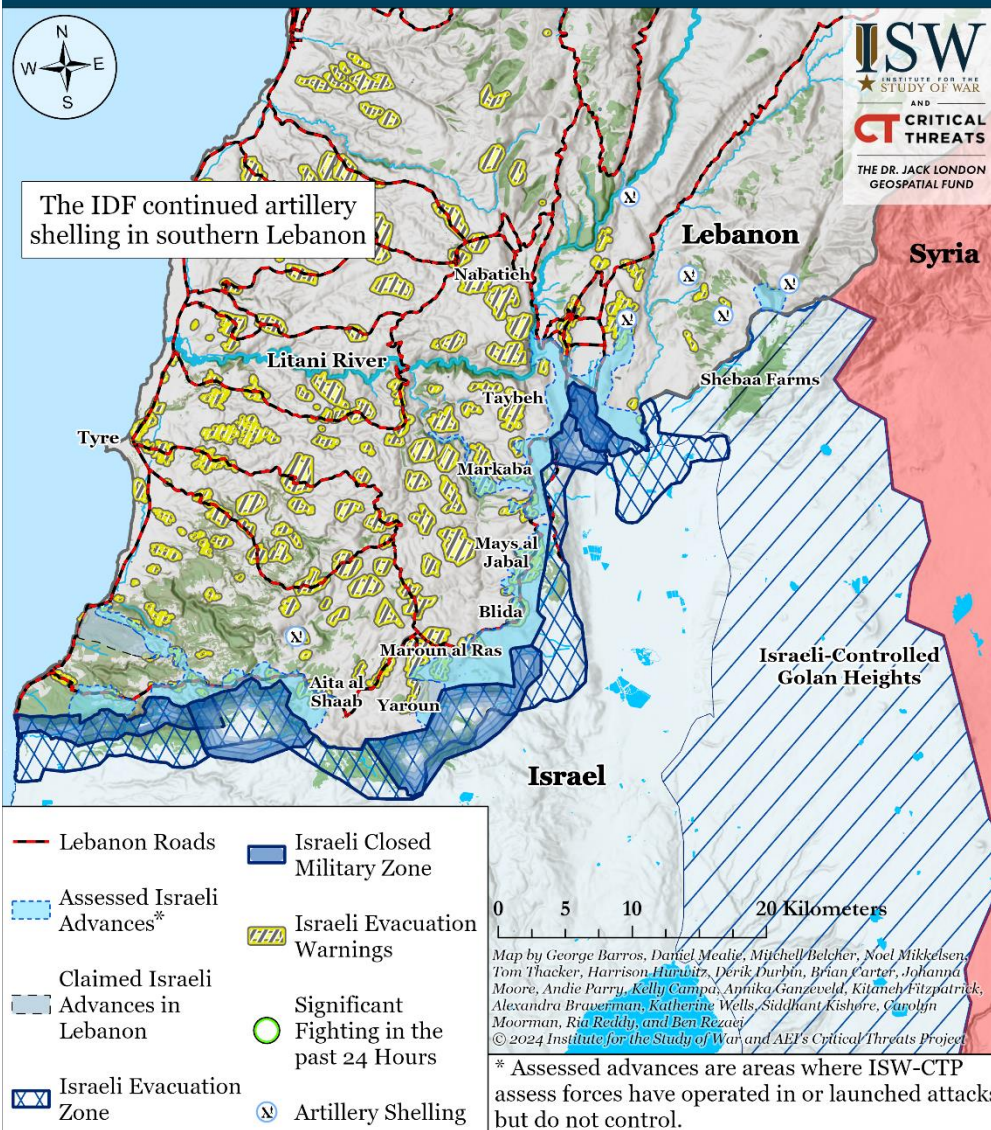
# Reported Israeli Operations in the Western Sector

## As of December 2, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



# Reported Israeli Operations in Lebanon

As of December 2, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



**The IDF Air Force struck several Hezbollah targets on December 2.** The IDF Air Force struck several military vehicles operating near Hezbollah’s missile manufacturing sites in the Bekaa Valley.[88] The IDF stated it also struck several vehicles operating along the Syrian-Lebanese border in the Hermel area, northeastern Lebanon, which is an area that Hezbollah has previously used to transfer weapons.[89] Local Lebanese media reported that an Israeli raid targeted a Lebanese Army bulldozer that was operating near the al Abara Army Center in Hawsh al Sayyid Ali, northeastern Lebanon.[90] The Lebanese Army reported that the Israeli airstrike injured an LAF soldier.[91] The IDF stated that it received the reports and that it is investigating the incident.[92] Israeli Army Radio reported that the IDF targeted Hezbollah's attempts to rehabilitate and reuse sites and border crossings in these strikes.[93]

**The IDF Air Force also conducted airstrikes in southern Lebanon on December 2.**[94] The IDF said it attacked several Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon to remove potential threats.[95] Local Lebanese media claimed that the IDF conducted a drone strike targeting a Lebanese state security member on a motorcycle in the town of Marjaayoun, southeastern Lebanon.[96] The IDF did not provide any immediate comment on the strike.

**Several Hezbollah targets that Israel struck have begun to resume operations.** Lebanese media reported on December 2 that 16 branches of al Qard al Hassan—one of Hezbollah’s main financial assets in Lebanon to manage its banking system and reportedly receive direct funding from Iran—have resumed operations.[97] Local media stated that dozens of Islamic Health Authority branches also resumed operations.[98] The IDF frequently targeted al Qard al Hassan and Islamic Health Authority branches in Lebanon to isolate Hezbollah’s financial networks and social institutions providing medical aid to its fighters. The Lebanese Minister of Public Works Ali Hamieh announced that the al Arida border crossing is also now operational since the IDF struck it on November 26.[99] Lebanese media also reported that the al Qaa border crossing between Syria and Lebanon is witnessing heavy traffic as thousands of Lebanese civilians return from Syria.[100]

**PIJ announced on December 2 that Israeli forces killed four PIJ fighters in southern Lebanon on an unspecified date.**[101] Two of the fighters were members of PIJ’s Syrian-based Martyr Ali al Aswad Brigade which has previously been affiliated with PIJ fighters killed in southern Lebanon.[102] PIJ also claimed that Israeli forces also killed two PIJ fighters in southern Lebanon.[103]

### **Iran and the Axis of Resistance**

**US Central Command (CENTCOM) confirmed that the Houthis attacked two US Navy destroyers and three American-flagged commercial vessels on December 1.**[104] CENTCOM stated that US Navy destroyers USS *Stockdale* and USS *O’Kane* successfully defeated three Houthi anti-ship ballistic missiles, one anti-ship cruise missile, and three one-way attack drones while transiting the Gulf of Aden between November 30 and December 1.[105] CENTCOM added that the destroyers were escorting three US-owned, operated, and flagged merchant vessels.[106] CENTCOM reported no injuries or damage to the vessels from the Houthi attack.

**The Iraqi Parliamentary Security and Defense Committee held an emergency meeting on December 2 to discuss the repercussions of the rebel offensive in Syria on Iraqi security.**[107] Iraqi Defense Minister Thabet al Abbasi, Army Chief of Staff General Abdul Amir Rashid Yarallah, and Border Guard Commander Mohammad Abdul Wahab Sukar al Saeedi, among others, attended the meeting.[108] Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mohsen al Mandalawi called on security forces to conduct preemptive operations to prevent “terrorist gangs” from infiltrating Iraq.[109] Mandalawi also called on security officials to continuously update security plans to confront “internal and external threats.” The Iraqi Defense Ministry separately reported on December 2 that the Iraqi Army deployed armored units to the al Qaim-Albu Kamal border area and the Iraqi border with Jordan.[110] Iran has historically used the al Qaim-Albu Kamal border crossing to transfer personnel and weapons into Syria.[111] Iraq also deployed Iraqi Army and Popular Mobilization Forces reinforcements to the Iraq-Syria border on December 2.[112] The Iraqi Army previously deployed three brigades to Sinjar in northwestern Iraq, along the border with Syria, on November 30.[113]



**Iranian-backed Afghan Shia militia Fatemiyoun also sent reinforcements to help support the SAA and allied forces fighting the Syrian opposition forces.[114]** An Iranian telegram channel posted that Fatemiyoun is recruiting personnel from Iran to fight in Syria.[115] Fatemiyoun is probably recruiting from Iran's large Afghan refugee population.

**The Iranian parliament approved the Chastity and Hijab bill on December 2, introducing new restrictions and penalties for women.[116]** The law will take effect on December 13. Iranian media published the full text of the legislation.[117] The law defines improper dress for women as clothing that exposes areas below the neck, above the ankles, or above the wrists, or clothing that "tempts" others.[118] The law includes a surveillance provision that allows government agencies to use their footage to identify 'violators'. Individuals who break the law can face fines of up to \$2000 and encounter difficulties with passport renewal, vehicle registration, driver's license registration, and obtaining country exit permits if they fail to pay. Iran recently opened the "Clinic for Quitting Hijab Removal" in Tehran, targeting women who refuse to comply with the mandatory hijab law and labeling them as mentally ill.[119] This is emblematic of the lack of serious changes in regime policies despite Masoud Pezeshkian, a moderate, assuming the presidency.

**German aviation magazine *Flug Revue* reported that Iran received two Su-35 fighter jets from Russia on November 18.[120]** The Iranian Artesh Air Force reportedly received them during a private ceremony at the Komsomolsk-on-Amur Aircraft Plant in eastern Russia. The jets were disassembled and sent to Mehrabad Airport in Tehran where they will be transferred to the 3rd Tactical Air Base near Hamedan for assembly. *Flug Revue* claimed that Iran has ordered an additional 25 Su-35s, increasing the total number to 50. CTP-ISW cannot verify these claims. Constrained Russian manufacturing capacity and Russia's demands in Ukraine could limit Russia's ability to send fighter jets to Iran, however.

**The Iranian Artesh Ground Forces conducted a counterterrorism exercise along the northeastern border and frontier areas from December 1 to 2, involving rapid reaction units, drone forces, and aerial fire support units.[121]**

*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.*

*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.*

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[1] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/pro-iranian-militias-enter-syria-iraq-aid-beleaguered-syrian-army-2024-12-02/> ;

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iraqi-militias-enter-syria-reinforce-government-forces-military-sources-say-2024-12-02/>

[2] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/pro-iranian-militias-enter-syria-iraq-aid-beleaguered-syrian-army-2024-12-02/> ;

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[3] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/pro-iranian-militias-enter-syria-iraq-aid-beleaguered-syrian-army-2024-12-02/>

[4] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/the-leadership-and-purpose-of-iraqs-popular-mobilization-forces>

[5] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/the-leadership-and-purpose-of-iraqs-popular-mobilization-forces>

[6] <https://x.com/NicoleGrajewski/status/1863212064807715081>

[7] <https://x.com/DeirEzzore/status/1863499570426114102>

[8] <https://www.newsweek.com/hezbollah-syria-does-not-need-fighters-assad-1993926>

[9] <https://www.ft.com/content/76ba9c5c-3f6a-40a9-b782-7910f5584a05>;  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/01/world/middleeast/syria-rebels-bashar-al-assad.html>

[10] <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1863470514146283992>

[11] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/israels-victory-lebanon>;  
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