

# Iran Update



**Alexandra Braverman, Kelly Campa, Siddhant Kishore, Katherine Wells, and Nicholas Carl**

**Information Cutoff: August 18, 2024, 2:00pm 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 [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.*

*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.*

**Hamas rejected the latest US-mediated ceasefire-hostage proposal negotiated last week with Egypt, Israel, and Qatar.[1]** An anonymous Hamas official told Saudi-owned Asharq News on August 18 that the US-mediated proposal “completely contradicts” Hamas’ previous demands.[2] The proposal included the following stipulations, according to the Hamas official, although CTP-ISW cannot verify the official’s claim.

- The IDF would reduce its force presence along the Philadelphi Corridor but not withdraw completely.
- The Palestinian Authority (PA) would manage the Rafah border crossing under “Israeli supervision.”
- Israel would monitor the displaced Gazans returning to the northern Gaza Strip and crossing the Netzarim Corridor.

- Israel would release a “large” number of Palestinian prisoners in exchange for Hamas releasing Israeli hostages.
- Israel would retain the right to veto the release of at least 100 Palestinian prisoners that Hamas demands.

Hamas in a statement on August 18 formerly rejected the proposal and accused Israel of setting “new conditions and demands” that obstructed the negotiations. Hamas criticized the lack of a provision for a permanent ceasefire in the latest proposal. Hamas rejected the possibility that the IDF would remain in the Gaza Strip, particularly around the Netzarim and Philadelphi corridors. Hamas also rejected the latest proposal for exchanging Israeli hostages with Palestinian prisoners. Hamas lastly reiterated its support for the ceasefire-hostage proposal that it submitted in July 2024. The contents of that proposal are not publicly available.[3]

Several senior Hamas officials similarly indicated to international media that there remain significant obstacles in the ceasefire-hostage negotiations, despite US optimism about the chances of striking a deal.[4] Hamas Political Bureau member and spokesperson Osama Hamdan claimed to al Jazeera on August 18 that Israel introduced “new ideas” in the most recent negotiations.[5] Hamdan criticized Israel for a permanent ceasefire and to withdraw its forces from the Gaza Strip. Hamdan also claimed that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is not serious about negotiations and called him the main obstacle to a ceasefire. Hamdan was in Doha, where the negotiations occurred, when making these remarks, indicating that he was involved in the negotiations alongside other senior Hamas officials.[6] Hamdan has previously served in senior roles in Hamas, representing the organization in Iran and Lebanon.[7] Hamas Political Bureau member Sami Abu Zuhri separately stated on August 17 that reports of progress towards a ceasefire-hostage deal are an “illusion.”[8]

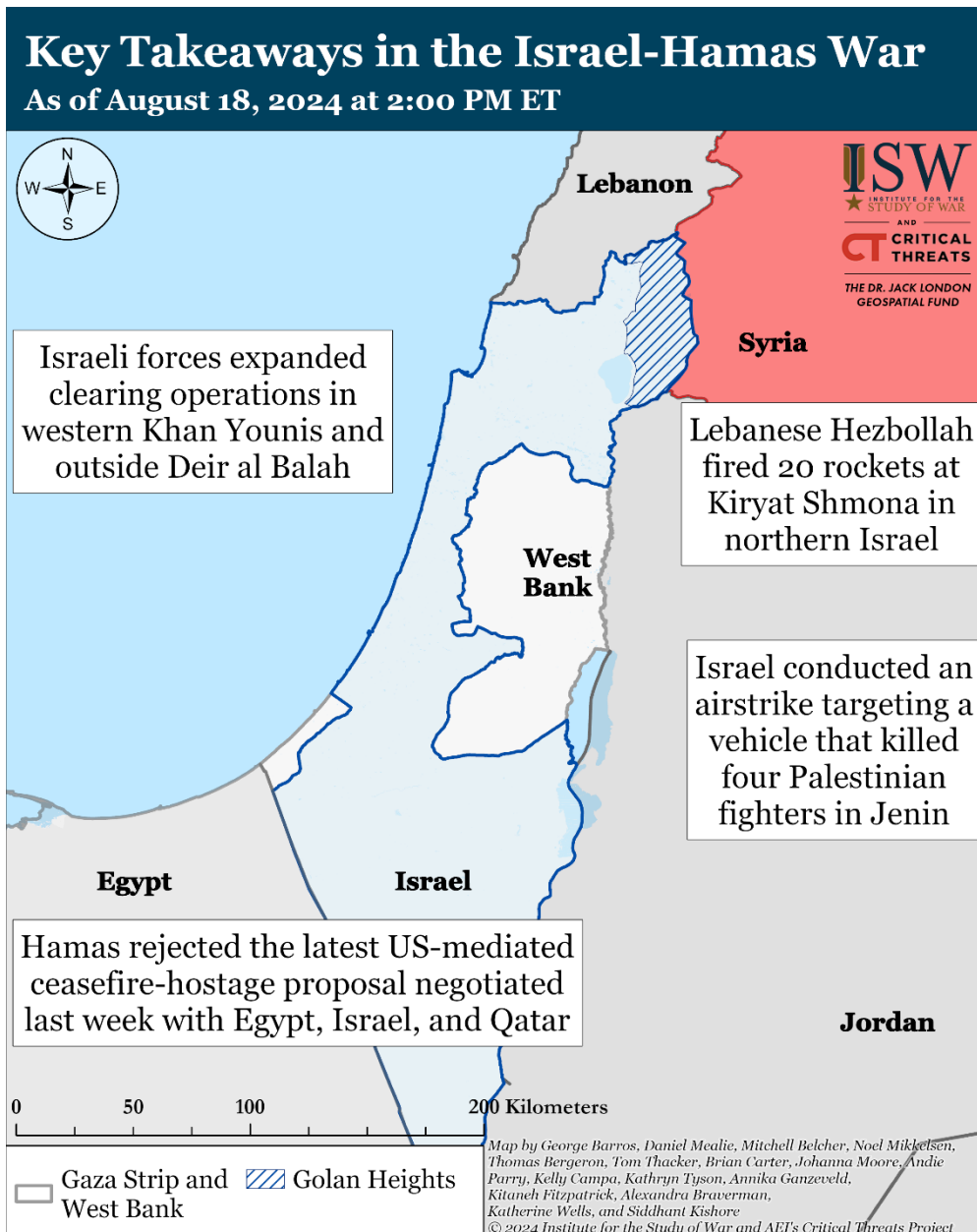
**US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Israel on August 18 to continue efforts to bridge gaps between Israel and Hamas regarding the US-mediated ceasefire-hostage proposal.[9]** The US State Department stated that Blinken will emphasize to the involved parties to “avoid escalation or any other actions that could undermine the ability to finalize an agreement.”[10] A senior State Department official stated, prior to the Hamas rejection, that there is a “strong belief” within the Joe Biden administration that any remaining gaps between Israel and Hamas are “bridgeable.”[11] Blinken will meet with Netanyahu on August 19.[12]

**Iran has engaged with international mediators throughout this latest of ceasefire-hostage negotiations.** Acting Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Bagheri Kani held two phone calls with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani on August 15 and 16.[13] An unspecified US official told Axios that Iran claimed that it wanted a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and to deescalate regional tensions.[14] Bagheri Kani separately held a phone call with Egyptian Foreign Affairs Minister Badr Abdelatty on August 17.[15] Bagheri Kani reiterated that Iran has the “inherent and legitimate right” to retaliate for the Israeli killing of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on July 31.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- Hamas rejected the latest US-mediated ceasefire-hostage proposal negotiated last week with Egypt, Israel, and Qatar. Several senior Hamas officials similarly indicated to international media that there remain significant obstacles in the ceasefire-hostage negotiations, despite US optimism about the chances of striking a deal.

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## 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 98th Division has expanded its clearing operations around western and northern Khan Younis since August 17.[16]** The IDF stated that it expanded its operations in response to intelligence of militia activity in the area, including indirect fire attacks into Israel from the al Mawasi humanitarian zone.[17]

The IDF 7th Brigade advanced north to “the outskirts of Deir al Balah.”[18] The 7th Brigade killed dozens of Palestinian fighters and destroyed an underground tunnel in northern Khan Younis before advancing toward Deir al Balah.[19] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades mortared Israeli forces around al Mahaten, which is approximately three kilometers south of Deir al Balah, on August 18.[20] The IDF has not conducted ground operations in this area since the beginning of the war.[21]

The IDF 35th Paratroopers Brigade expanded clearing operations around western Khan Younis and advanced into Hamad neighborhood, specifically into an area formerly designated as the al Mawasi humanitarian zone.[22] The IDF removed a section of northwest Khan Younis and southern Deir al Balah that included Hamad neighborhood from the humanitarian zone on August 16.[23] The 35th Paratroopers Brigade identified underground tunnels in the area.[24] Three Palestinian militias attacked Israeli forces in Hamad on August 18.[25] PIJ and the al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades separately mortared Israeli personnel and vehicles in the area.[26] Hamas fighters detonated two improved explosive devices (IED), including a “barrel bomb,” targeting Israeli forces west of Hamad.[27] A local Palestinian journalist reported that IDF armor entered Hamad from the west.[28] The journalist also reported that IDF vehicles operated in Asdaa, west of Hamad.[29]

Israeli forces killed dozens of Palestinian fighters and destroyed militia infrastructure in unspecified areas of Khan Younis.[30] Israeli forces have located grenades, Kalashnikov rifles, and IEDs in recent days.[31] The IDF Air Force struck militia positions in Khan Younis from which fighters launched rockets that crossed into Nirim and destroyed loaded projectile launchers in the Khan Younis area.[32]

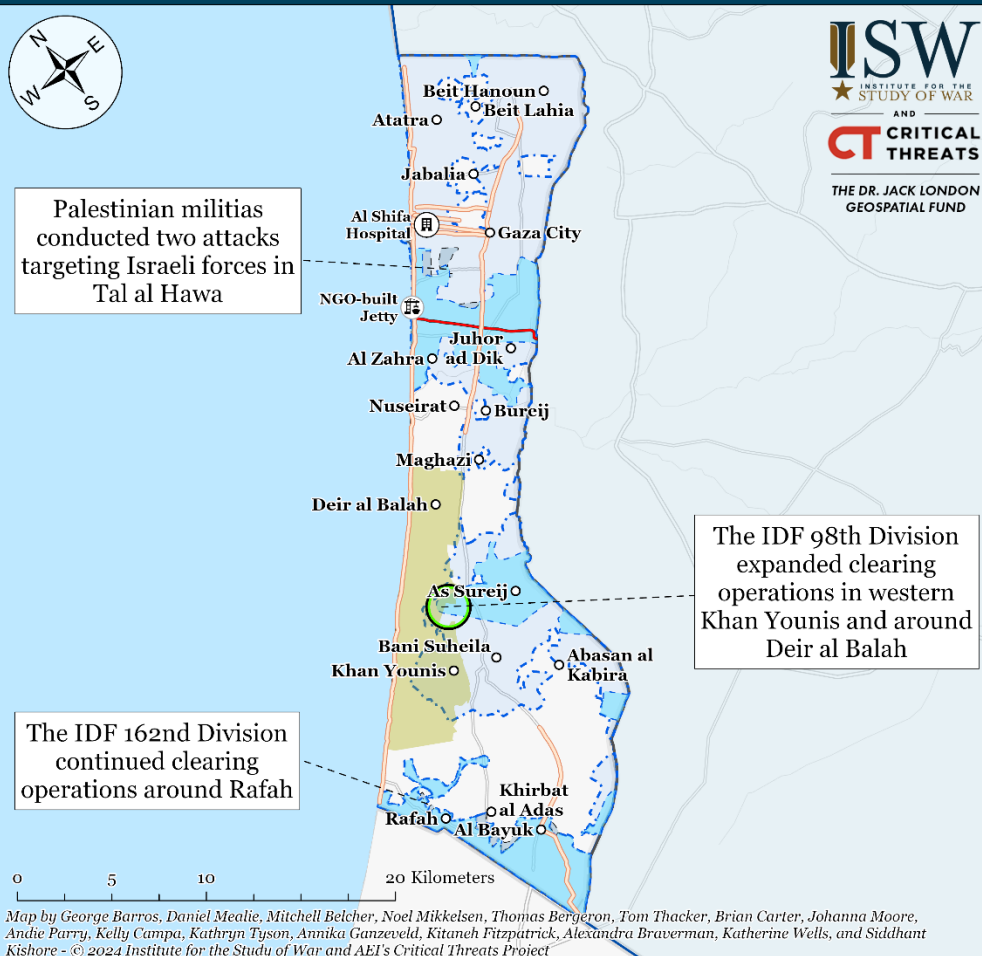
**Palestinian militias conducted two attacks targeting Israeli forces in Tal al Hawa, south of Gaza City, on August 18.[33]** Hamas fighters fired an anti-personnel shell targeting an IDF unit near the University College of Applied Sciences in Tal al Hawa.[34] The al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades mortared Israeli personnel and vehicles operating in the area.[35]

**The al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades mortared Israeli forces around the Netzarim Corridor on August 18.[36]**

**The IDF 162nd Division continued to conduct clearing operations above and below ground in Rafah on August 18.[37]** The IDF Nahal Brigade killed Palestinian fighters, destroyed militia infrastructure, and located weapons, including machine guns, Kalashnikov rifles, grenades, and other unspecified military equipment.[38]

# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of August 18, 2024, 2:00 PM ET

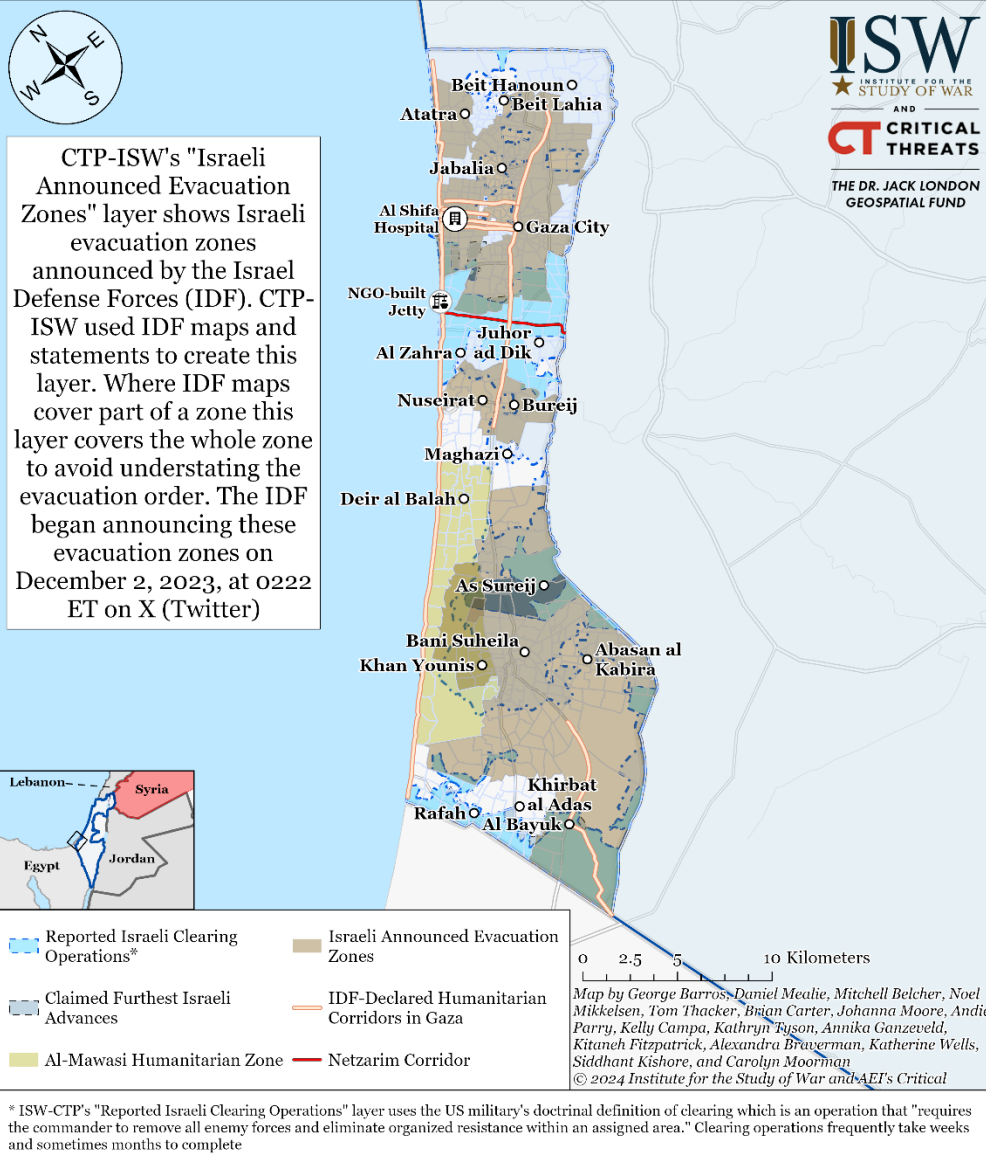


\* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete



# Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip

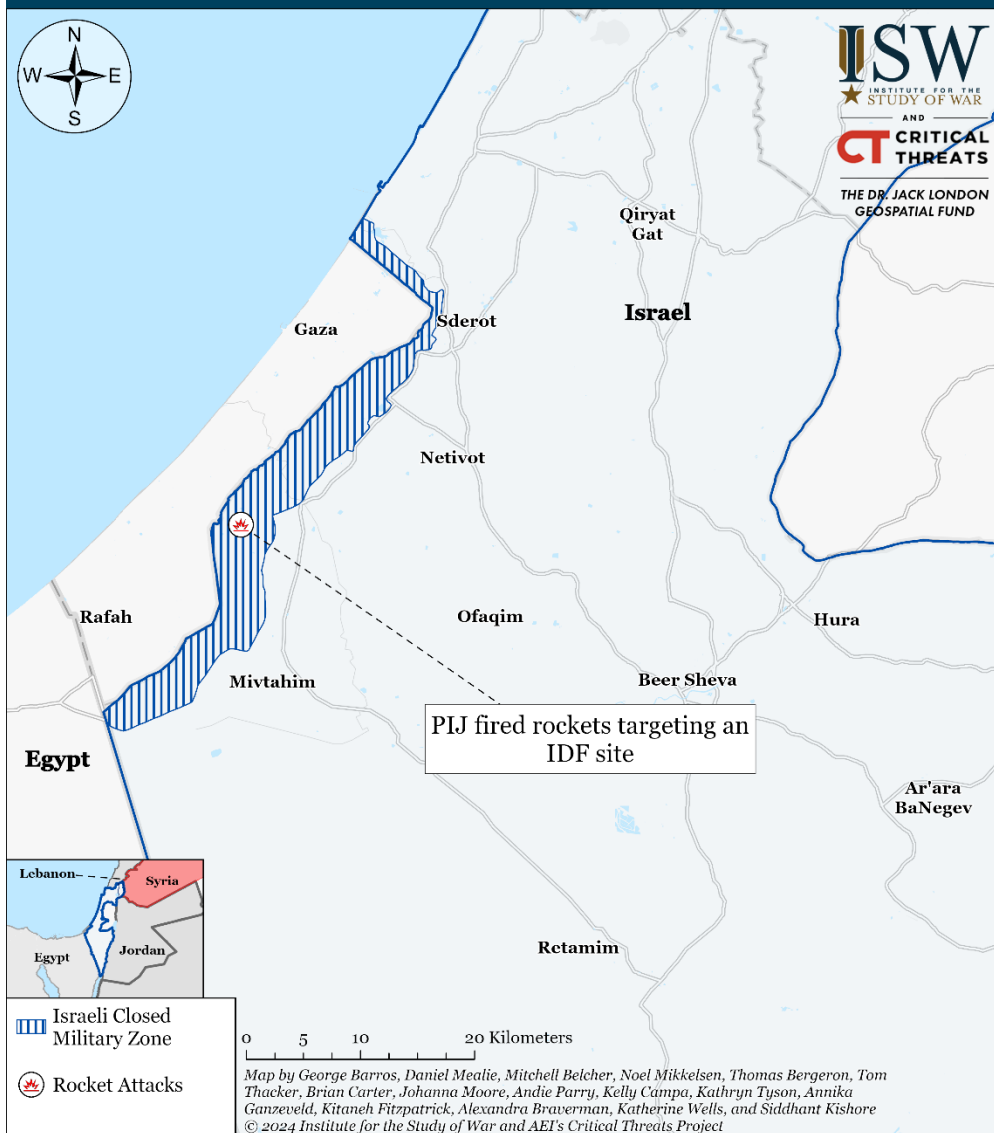
As of August 18, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



## PIJ fired rockets at an IDF site in southern Israel on August 18.[39]

# Attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip

As of August 18, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



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

## West Bank

### Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

**Israeli forces have engaged Palestinian fighters in at least two locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on August 17.[40]** The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fired small arms at an IDF checkpoint east of Tulkarm city.[41]

**The IDF conducted an airstrike targeting a vehicle and killed four Palestinian fighters in Jenin on August 17.[42]** Two of the fighters were senior Hamas members Ahmed Abu Ara and Raafat Dawasi.[43] The IDF stated that Abu Ara was involved in manufacturing explosive devices for "terrorist purposes." [44] Hamas claimed that Dawasi was an al Qassem Brigades commander in the



Jenin Governorate.[45] The IDF reported that both Hamas members were involved in a shooting attack that killed an Israeli civilian in northern Jordan Valley on August 11.[46] Hamas claimed that both Abu Ara and Dawasi were separately responsible for a complex attack that targeted Israeli forces with three IEDs on the border fence between Jalbul, in the West Bank, and Meirav, in Israel on July 23.[47] The IDF conducted an investigation and detained an individual following Hamas' shooting attack in Northern Jordan Valley on August 11.[48] The IDF reported that the detained individual revealed the identities of Abu Ara and Dawasi.

**An unidentified individual attacked an Israeli security guard with a hammer in Kedumim settlement in the West Bank on August 18.[49]** An Israeli Army Radio correspondent reported that the Israeli security guard was killed after sustaining serious injuries.[50] The attacker reportedly stole the Israeli security guard's firearm and fled the scene.[51] The IDF launched a search in the area around Kedumim settlement.[52]



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



## **Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights**

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

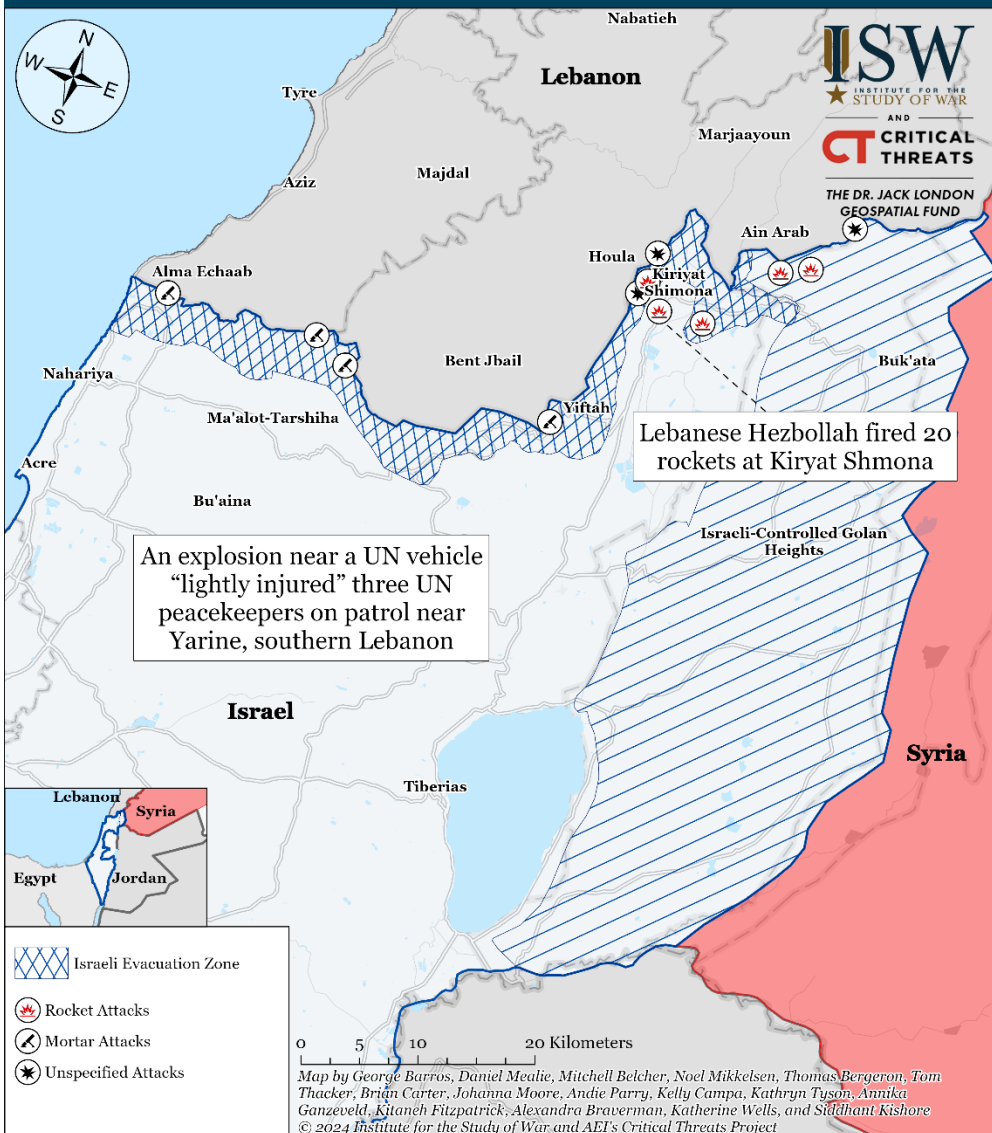
- Deter Israel from conducting a ground operation into Lebanon
- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

**Iranian-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, have conducted at least 12 attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on August 17.[53]** The IDF reported that Hezbollah launched 20 rockets at Kiryat Shmona area in northern Israel on August 18.[54] The IDF confirmed that it intercepted some of these rockets and did not report any casualties.

**UN Interim Force in Lebanon spokesperson Andrea Tenenti announced that an explosion near a UN vehicle “lightly injured” three UN peacekeepers on patrol near Yarine, southern Lebanon, on August 18.[55]** The IDF confirmed that they were investigating the incident.[56]

# Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

As of August 18, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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[2] <https://asharq dot com/politics/97612/حماس-تكشف-ل-الشرق-تفاصيل-المقترح-الأميركي-بشأن-اتفاق-غزة>

[3] <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gex1rl6q50>

[4] <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/18/world/middleeast/blinken-israel-gaza-hamas.html> ;  
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- [5] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ar4MqvDtHyo>
- [6] <https://x.com/jimsciutto/status/1824911792746725405> ; <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1423892/hamas-leader-osama-hamdan-denied-reports-of-communication-difficulties-with-sinwar.html>
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- [14] <https://www.axios.com/2024/08/17/gaza-hostage-ceasefire-deal-biden-next-week>
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