

# Iran Update



**Andie Parry, Annika Ganzeveld, Kelly Campa, Carolyn Moorman, Alexandra Braverman, Ria Reddy, Katherine Wells, Ben Rezaei, Johanna Moore, Karolina Hird, and Nicholas Carl**

**Information Cutoff: 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.*

*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.*

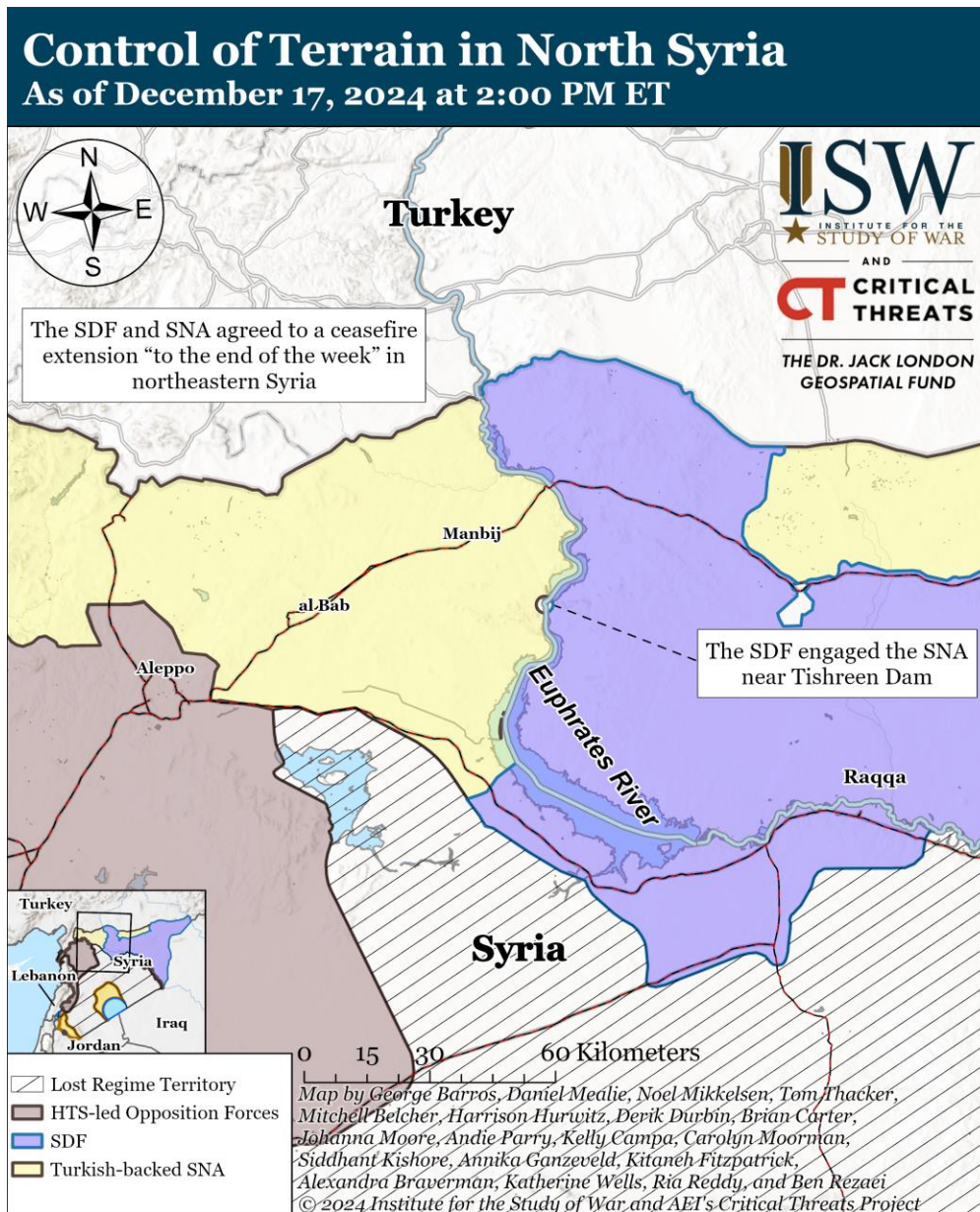
**The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) agreed to extend their temporary ceasefire in northeastern Syria “to the end of the week.”**<sup>[1]</sup> The ceasefire was originally meant to last from December 12 to 16.<sup>[2]</sup> The SNA and Turkey deployed artillery and fighters to the front lines around Kobani on December 17 before the ceasefire extension<sup>[3]</sup>. SDF elements under the Manbij Military Council engaged the SNA on Tishreen Dam for several hours on December 17, but fighting was mostly contained to the area<sup>[4]</sup>

The SNA and Turkey may launch an offensive to capture Kobani and other SDF-held territory after the ceasefire expires. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Turkish military buildup near Kobani includes special operations forces and resembles preparations ahead of previous Turkish incursions into northern Syria.<sup>[5]</sup> Local sources reported on December 16 that Turkey has dismantled the border wall near Kobani, further indicating that Turkish forces are preparing for offensive operations in the area.<sup>[6]</sup> These possible preparations come shortly after the Turkish foreign affairs minister said on December 13 that a Turkish strategic objective is to “eliminate” the SDF.<sup>[7]</sup>

The SDF wants to negotiate a permanent ceasefire under which it would establish “a demilitarized zone in Kobani” under US supervision.<sup>[8]</sup> The SDF General Command released a statement accusing Turkey of wanting to seize and annex all Syrian territory.<sup>[9]</sup> The possibility of an SNA-Turkish offensive comes as SDF is facing widespread defections from its ranks.<sup>[10]</sup> The SDF called for Arab and Kurdish youth to “join the ranks of the SDF” in a statement and has reportedly called up SDF fighters on break to help manage these defections.<sup>[11]</sup>

Fighting in northeastern Syria risks ethnically motivated harassment and violence against Kurds there given that Turkish-backed fighters have previously committed atrocities against the Kurdish population and fighters. SNA fighters executed injured SDF fighters at hospitals in northern Syria and reportedly looted civilian areas in Manbij during their most recent offensive into Manbij, for example.<sup>[12]</sup> Such crimes risk upsetting Syria’s current relative stability. Some elements of the SNA, such as the Suleiman

Shah Brigade, are sanctioned for committing serious human rights abuses against Kurdish populations during the Turkish-backed operation to seize Afrin, northwestern Syria, in 2019.[13]



**Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) leader Ahmed al Shara (also known as Abu Mohammad al Jolani) announced on December 16 that the HTS-led interim government will dissolve all former opposition forces and integrate them into the new Syrian Defense Ministry.[14]** This announcement, which Shara made during a meeting with members of the Syrian Druze community, is part of his effort to rebuild the Syrian security sector.[15] Syrian Interim Prime Minister Mohammad al Bashir has similarly described plans to cohere former opposition groups under the Defense Ministry.[16] Shara likely discussed these plans during meetings with leaders from several opposition groups under the SNA, including the Hamza Division, Suleiman Shah Brigade, and Jaish al

Ahrar, on December 16.[17] The United States sanctioned the Hamza Division and Suleiman Shah Brigade in August 2023 for committing “serious human rights abuses against those residing in the Afrin region of northern Syria.”[18] Shara also met with leaders from Jaish al Izza, which operates under the HTS-led Fateh al Mubin coalition.[19] It is far from clear that Shara can cohere the many different opposition groups, which have a diverse range of allegiances and ideologies, into a unified national force.

**HTS leader Shara has suggested that elections and the drafting of a new Syrian constitution are unlikely to occur in the near term.**[20] Shara said that elections are “somewhat far-fetched now” while speaking to foreign journalists in Damascus on December 16[21] Shara added that “Syria has many problems” that require “patience.”[22] Shara also said that forming a constitutional committee is a “long process,” implying that doing so will take some time. An unspecified adviser to Shara told foreign journalists that “it could be a year or more” before constitutional committees are created.[23]

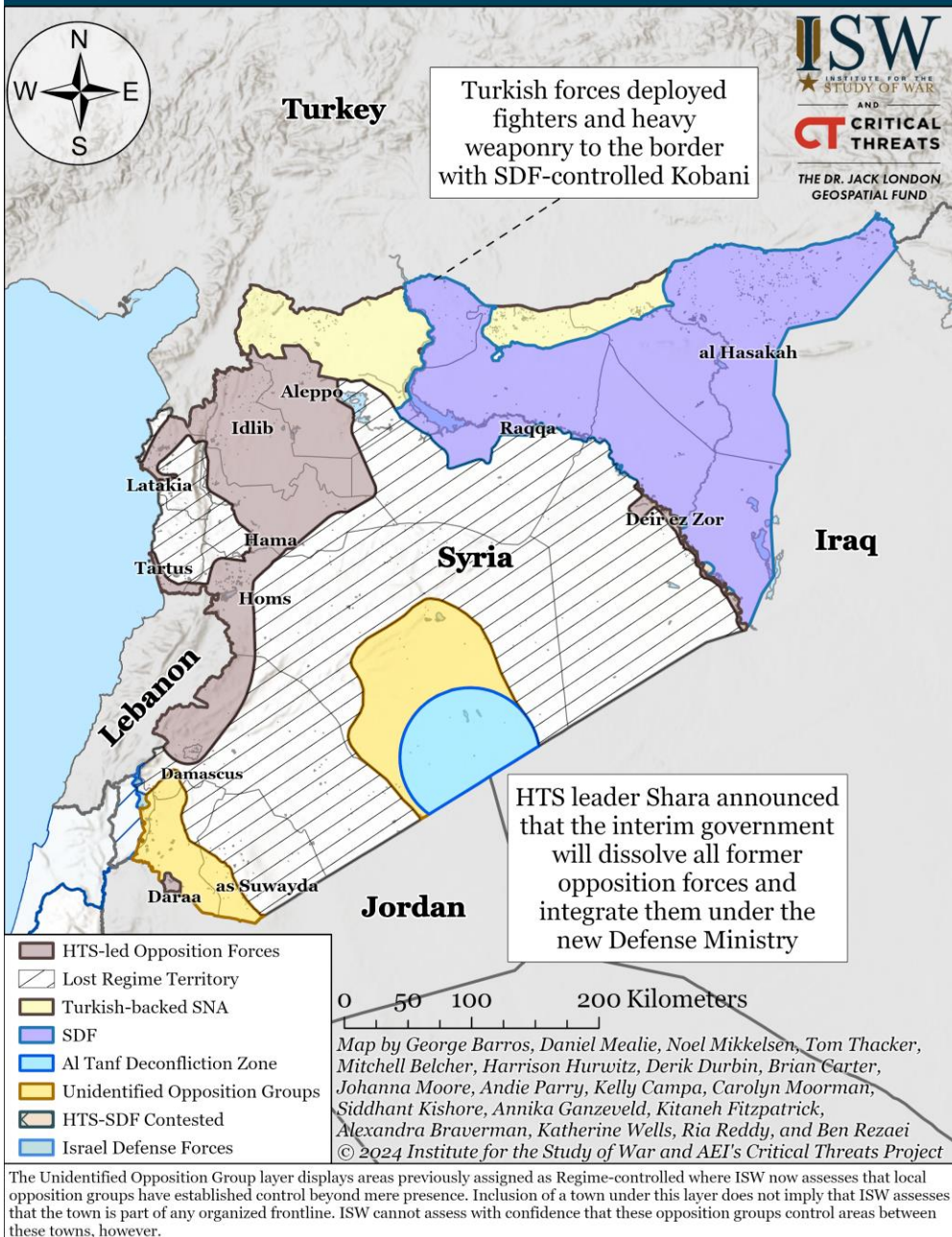
It is unclear what will happen after the term of the interim government expires in March 2025 given Shara’s comments. Syrian Interim Prime Minister Mohammad al Bashir has said that the interim government would end by then.[24] No officials in the interim government have conveyed plans for what would proceed with the expiration of the government at the time of this writing.

**HTS leader Shara continued to portray HTS as a moderate force in his foreign engagements likely in order to cultivate foreign backing.** Western media reported that Sharaa downplayed the possibility of imposing Islamic law on Syria to foreign journalists on December 19 and said that the government will “not deeply intrude on personal freedoms.”[25] Shara noted that unspecified “customs” will be considered, however.[26] Shara has repeatedly tried to present HTS as a moderate force and continues to do so as he receives diplomatic visits from countries that have designated or support the designation of HTS as a terrorist organization.[27] Shara called on several governments to remove their terrorist designations for HTS on December 16, claiming that lifting the designations is necessary for Syria to rebuild.[28]



# Reported Control of Terrain in Syria

As of December 17, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



**Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) will remain on the Syrian side of Mount Hermon until Israel reaches “another arrangement” to ensure Israeli security.[29]** Netanyahu and Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz visited IDF elements on Mount Hermon on December 17.[30] Netanyahu and Katz held a situational assessment with IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi, Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar, and Northern Command Commander Uri Gordin.[31] Katz said that the IDF will remain in its positions on the mountain for “whatever length of time is required,” citing that Mount Hermon offers observation

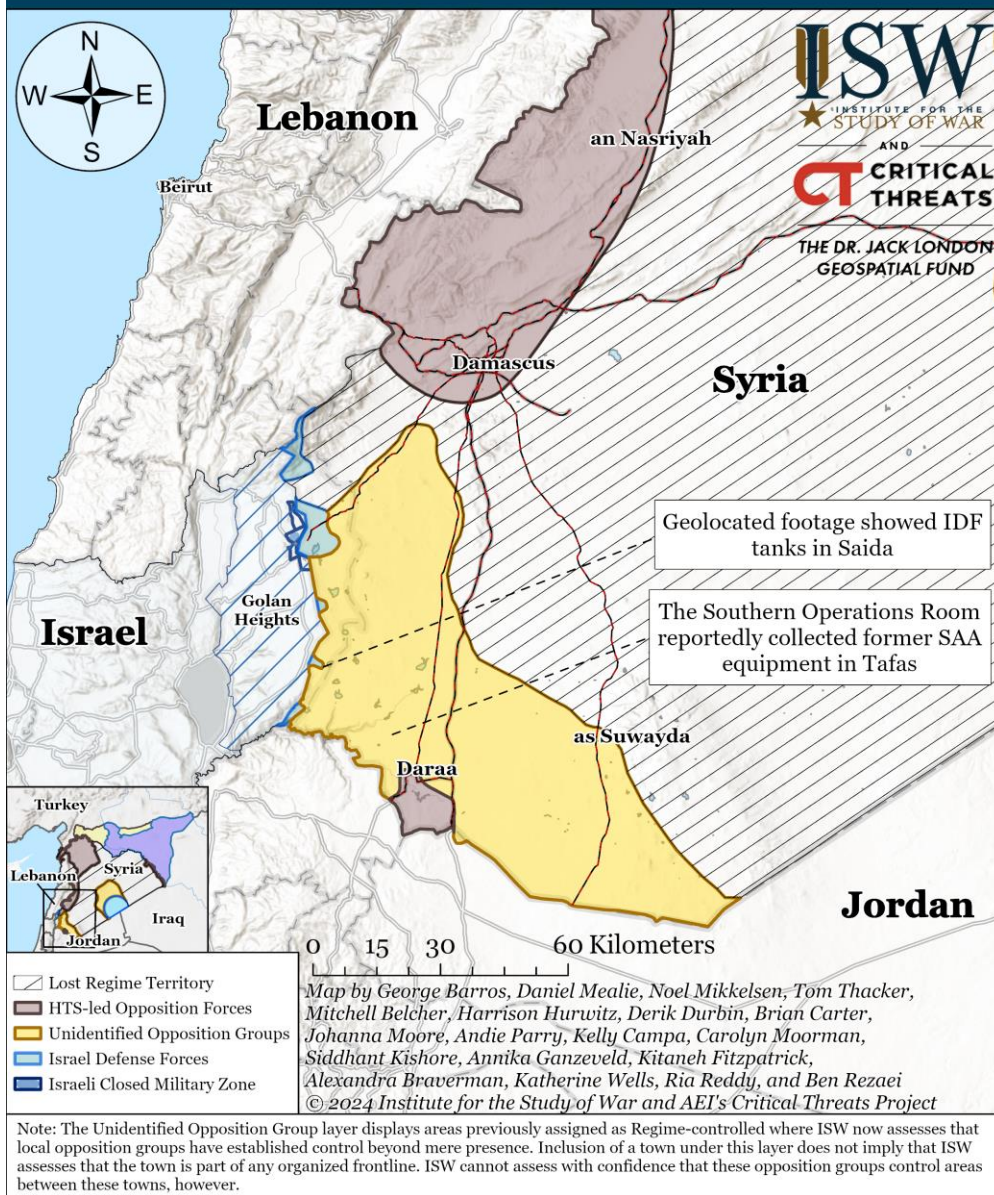
into both southern Syria and Bekaa Valley in Lebanon.[32] The IDF seized the Syrian side of Mount Hermon on December 8.[33]

**The IDF continued to operate in southern Syrian towns on December 17.**[34] Geolocated footage posted on December 17 showed IDF tanks in Saida, which is just outside the disengagement line on the border between Daraa and Quneitra provinces.[35] Local media reported that IDF armor advanced into Saida to search former Syrian Arab Army (SAA) battalion sites in the area, including in the nearby town of Maqraz.[36] The IDF appears to have successfully reached an agreement with local Syrian officials to have Syrians gather materiel left in the area by the SAA and bring them to the IDF.[37] Israeli media posted footage that showed the IDF loading hundreds of crates containing ammunition and weapons confiscated during operations into trucks.[38] Israeli media reported on December 17 that Syrian villagers have asked the new Syrian interim government and other Arab countries to push Israel out southern Syria.[39]

**The Southern Operations Room appears to be conducting similar weapons-collecting operations in western Daraa Province towns.** Local media reported that the Southern Operations Room—an opposition coalition that now controls most of southwestern Syria and coordinates with the HTS-led interim government—called upon residents of Tafas, western Daraa Province, to hand over any military vehicles, weapons, or other state property.[40] The Southern Operations Room set a week-long deadline for people to hand over these possessions and warned that anyone still possessing them at the end of the deadline will be punished, according to the report.[41] These weapons-collecting efforts in the western Daraa countryside appear to be distinct from Israeli operations along the disengagement line.

# Opposition Advances in Southwest Syria

As of December 17, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Neither the Kremlin nor the interim Syrian government appear sure of the future of Russian bases in Syria, likely accounting for Russia's continued visible preparations at Hmeimim Air Base and the Port of Tartus to withdraw forces despite claims and reports that the interim Syrian government might extend Russian basing rights. Various HTS-affiliated sources have given Western media outlets conflicting statements about the status of Russian bases—suggesting that there is likely some dissonance even within the transitional Syrian government about its plan regarding Russian bases. The *Economist* cited an HTS source on December 17 saying that Russia and HTS have "now entered negotiations" and that HTS "has conceded that it will probably allow Russia to keep some or all of its bases."<sup>[42]</sup> UK-based, Qatari-owned news outlet *Al Araby al Jadeed* reported on December 16, in contrast, that sources "close to the [HTS-led] military operations department" in Syria stated that Russia will withdraw all its military forces from Syria within one



month, as ISW reported.[43]The divergent HTS-affiliated reporting suggests that HTS itself has not come to a decision on Russian basing yet, and HTS is likely facing substantial international pressure to fully remove the Russian presence from Syria. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas stated on December 16 that the EU will raise the possibility of closing all Russian bases in Syria "with the country's new leadership." [44] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) noted on December 16 that Russia is "closely monitoring" developments in Syria and that Moscow believes that there is a path to a "sustainable normalization of the situation in Syria...through the launch of an inclusive intra-Syrian dialogue." [45]

Visual evidence and Syrian reporting continue to indicate that Russian forces are preparing to either significantly draw down or fully withdraw from Syria, however. A well-placed Damascus-based outlet reported on December 17 that Russian forces were evacuating their positions in Latakia (Hmeimim Air Base) and preparing a large military convoy to leave via the Port of Tartus.[46] Maxar satellite imagery from December 17 shows a Russian Il-76 transport aircraft and dozens of military vehicles on the tarmac at Hmeimim Airbase and dozens of Russian military vehicles assembled at the Port of Tartus (see embedded images below). Russia is likely adopting this tentative posture and withdrawing some assets on the chance that HTS decides deny Russia a continued military presence in Syria, but it remains unclear what HTS intends to do.



*Russian Il-76 transport aircraft and military vehicles on the tarmac at Hmeimim Airbase on December 17, 2024. Source: Satellite image ©2024 Maxar Technologies*

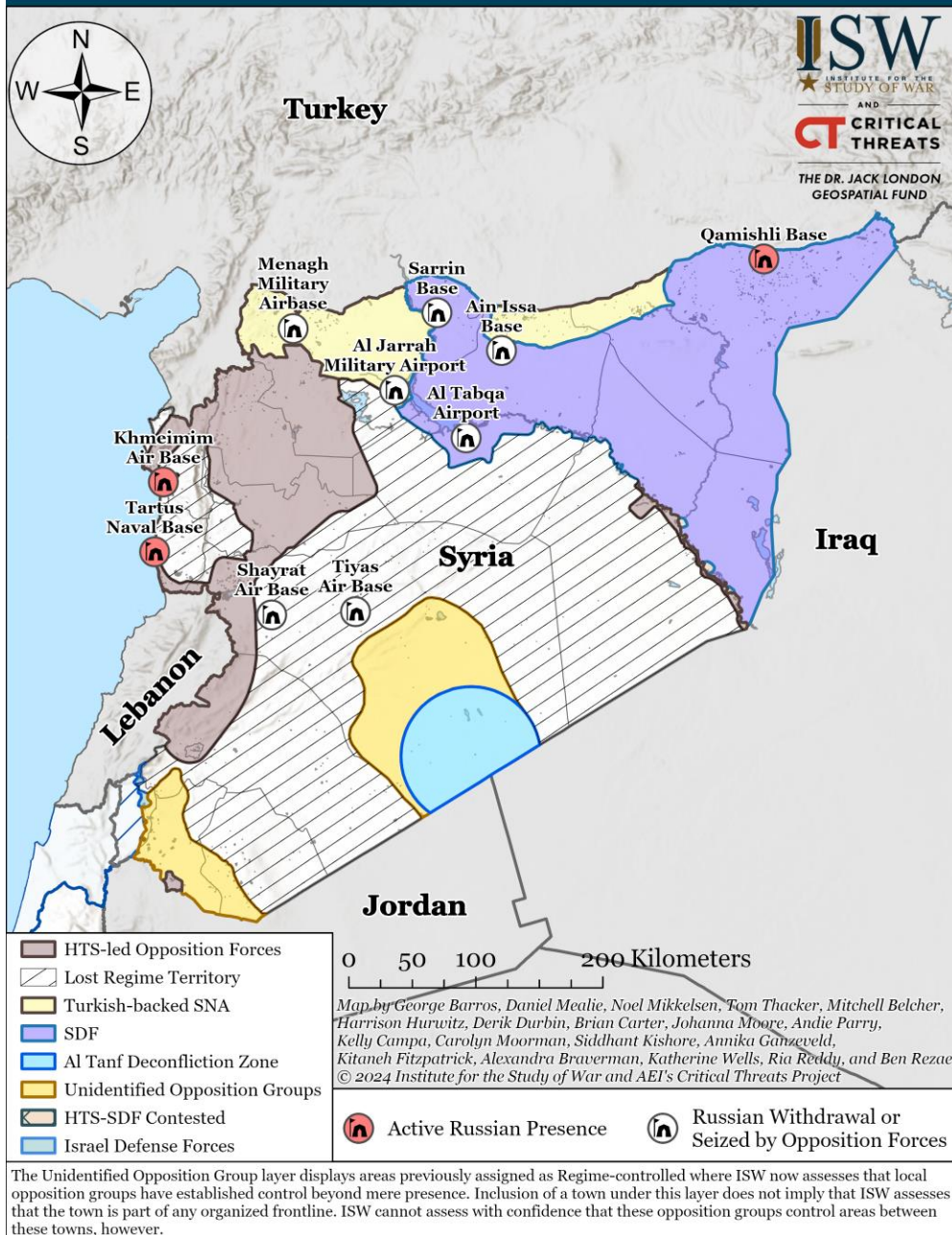


*Russian military vehicles assembled at the Port of Tartus on December 17. Source: Satellite image  
©2024 Maxar Technologies*



# Status of Russian Bases in Syria

As of December 17, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



**Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said that Iran is continuing “any possible support and assistance” to Hezbollah and “Palestinian fighters” in a speech on December 17.[47]**

CTP-ISW has assessed that the sudden fall of the Bashar al Assad regime in Syria will severely undermine future Iranian efforts to rebuild Hezbollah and Hamas.[48] The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) long used Syria under Assad to move material to proxy and partner forces around the Israeli periphery. HTS leader Ahmad al Shara said on December 14 that Iranian presence in Syria has ended.[49] It is unclear therefore whether Khamenei is referring to specific material support when saying that Iran is continuing to support Hezbollah and Palestinian fighters.

**Israeli media reported on December 17 that Israel and Saudi Arabia may normalize relations during the second phase of a ceasefire-hostage deal between Israel and Hamas.[50]** Saudi Arabia has accepted Israel’s vague commitment to a “path towards Palestinian statehood” rather than the long-held demand for an explicit recognition of a Palestinian state, according to sources familiar with recent negotiations. Normalization would reportedly occur in the second phase of a ceasefire-hostage deal after a first phase that would entail a hostage-prisoner exchange, a cessation of fighting in the Gaza Strip for an unspecified period, and a gradual IDF withdrawal from the Strip. Israeli media provided no further details of the expected timeline of these phases. The source added that Saudi Arabia along with a coalition of unspecified countries and the Palestinian Authority would manage reconstruction in the Gaza Strip and ensure Israeli security along the Philadelphi Corridor.

**Hamas demanded that Israel stops “setting new conditions” in ceasefire-hostage discussions on December 17.[51]** A senior Israeli political source claimed on December 17 that the main issue currently impacting negotiations is the number of hostages to be released.[52] Hamas continues to demand a guarantee that any deal for the release of some hostages will lead to a more comprehensive deal later and for displaced Palestinians to be able to return to the northern Gaza Strip.[53] A Hamas official told Western media on December 16 that Hamas has relented on its demands for a complete end to the war and a full withdrawal of the IDF from the Gaza Strip.[54] This reflects a change in Hamas’ maximalist position following a report on December 10 that Hamas officials are willing to accept an extended IDF presence along the Netzarim and Philadelphi corridors while still demanding an eventual, complete IDF withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.[55]

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Syria:** The US-backed SDF and Turkish-backed SNA agreed to extend their temporary ceasefire in northeastern Syria “to the end of the week.” Turkey and the SNA appear to be preparing to launch an offensive to capture SDF-held Syrian territory after the ceasefire expires.
- **Syria:** HTS leader Ahmed al Shara announced that the HTS-led interim Syrian government will dissolve all former opposition forces and integrate them under the new Defense Ministry. This announcement is part of Shara’s effort to rebuild the Syrian security sector.
- **Syria:** HTS leader Ahmed al Shara suggested that elections and the drafting of a new Syrian constitution are unlikely to occur in the near term. It is unclear therefore what will proceed after the term of the interim Syrian government expires in March 2025.
- **Russia:** Neither Russia nor the HTS-led interim Syrian government appear sure of the future of Russian basing in Syria. Syrian reporting and visual evidence continue to suggest that Russian forces are preparing draw down significantly or even fully from Syria, however.
- **Israel:** Israel and Saudi Arabia may normalize relations during the second phase of a ceasefire-hostage deal between Israel and Hamas, according to Israeli media. This report comes amid indications that Hamas has softened its maximalist position in talks with Israel.

### **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 17.** A Palestinian journalist reported small arms fire from IDF vehicles in Beit Lahia and Jabalia.[56]

**The IDF 84th Brigade (162nd Division) killed Palestinian fighters in a tunnel shaft during clearing operations in the Jabalia area in mid-October 2024.**[57] Three Israeli reservists died in the operation.[58] The IDF located and destroyed an underground shaft that measured one-kilometer-long and about 20-meters-deep.[59] The IDF also found living facilities, weapons, and other passages in the tunnel.

**The IDF continued clearing operations around Gaza City.** A Palestinian journalist reported small arms from IDF vehicles south of Tal al Hawa on December 16.[60] The Mujahideen Brigades fired rockets targeting the IDF in Shujaiya on December 17.[61]

**Palestinian militias conducted two attacks targeting IDF sites around the Netzarim Corridor on December 17.**[62]

**The IDF operated in southwestern parts of al Mawasi humanitarian zone on December 17.** A Reuters and Palestinian journalist reported IDF vehicles and tanks advancing into al Mawasi.[63]

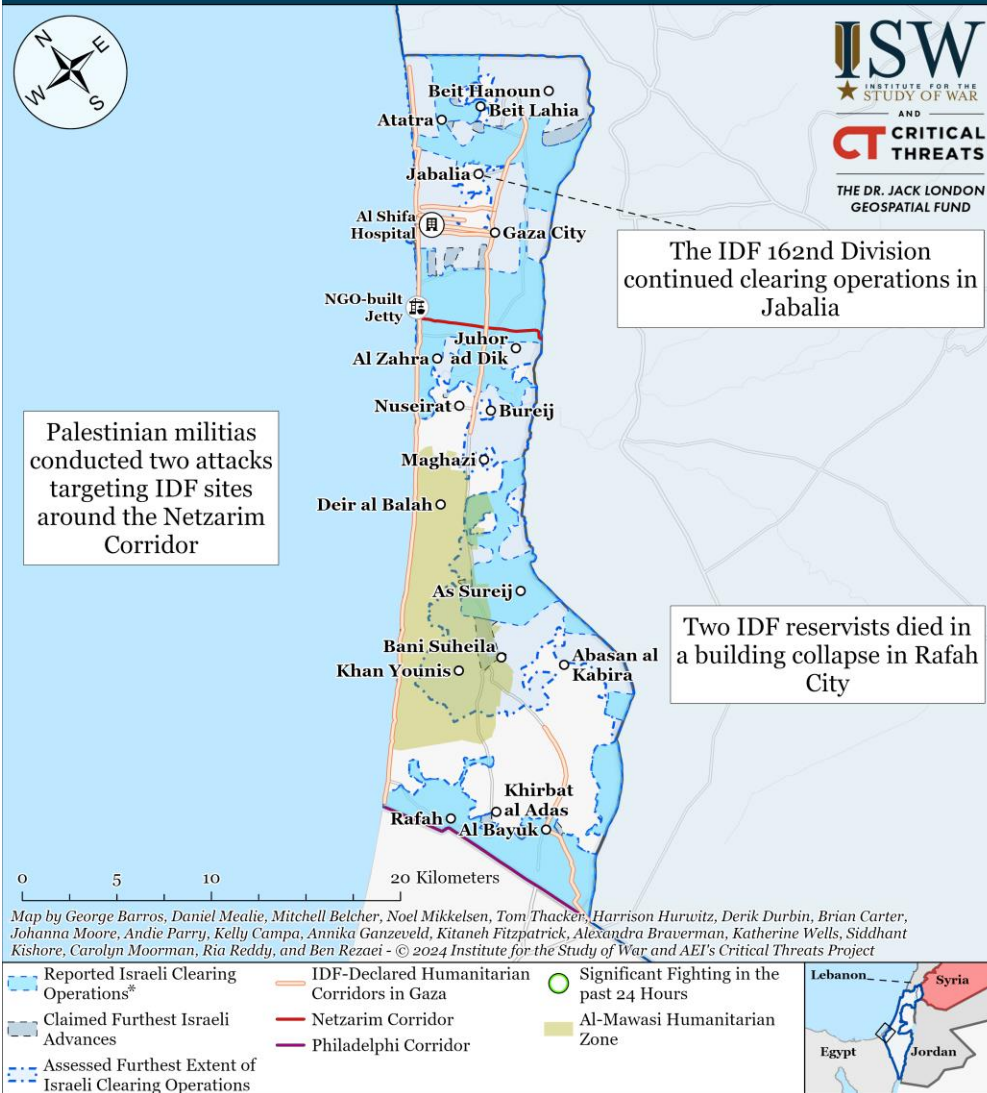
**The IDF 143rd Brigade continued clearing operations near Rafah City, southern Gaza Strip, on December 17.** Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) mortared the IDF southwest of Rafah City.[64] A Palestinian journalist reported shooting from military vehicles west of Rafah City.[65]

**Two IDF reservists when a building collapsed in Shabura refugee camp, east of Rafah City, on December 17.**[66] An IDF investigation clarified that the building's collapse was not due to a Palestinian militia attack.[67]



# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of December 17, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



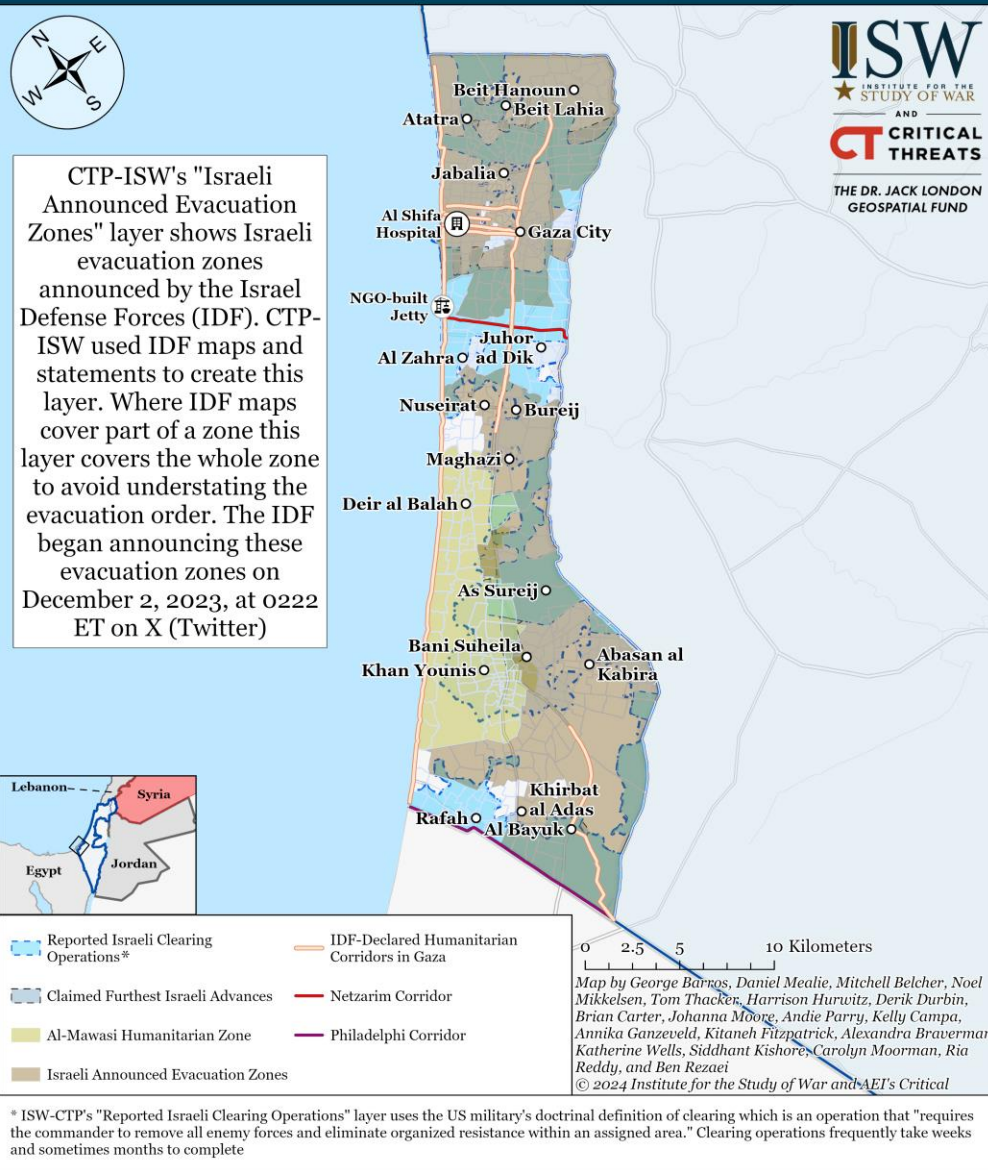
Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, Derik Durbin, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, and Ben Rezaei - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- ▨ Reported Israeli Clearing Operations\*
- ▬ IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- ▨ Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- ▬ Netzarim Corridor
- ▭ Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
- ▬ Assessed Furthest Extent of Israeli Clearing Operations
- ▬ Philadelphi Corridor



\* 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 December 17, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



**A Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) delegation met with Egyptian Intelligence head Hassan Rashad on December 17 to discuss ceasefire-hostage negotiations and post-war governance in the Gaza Strip.[68]** PFLP added in its statement that the two sides discussed ways to manage the Gaza Strip within the “framework of the Palestinian national consensus.” This is possibly about the joint declaration Hamas, Fatah, and other unspecified Palestinian political factions signed in July 2024 to form a “temporary national unity government” responsible for governing the Gaza Strip and the West Bank after the war.[69] Hamas said it met with several Palestinian figures during post-war governance and ceasefire-hostage negotiations in Cairo from December 1-3, including PFLP leadership.[70]

## West Bank

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

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

**The IDF announced the establishment of a new light infantry division responsible for patrols and routine security on December 17.[71]** The 96th “David” Division will be composed of five brigades that will operate in the West Bank and along its borders with Israel and Jordan.[72] The IDF aims to recruit 15,000 reservists, including at least 12,000 volunteers, between the ages of 38-58.[73] Certain brigades in the division will draw on volunteers from local Israeli border areas. The IDF stated its goal for this division is to provide a “rapid response” capability to crises that erupt around Israeli borders.[74]

## Northern Israel and Lebanon

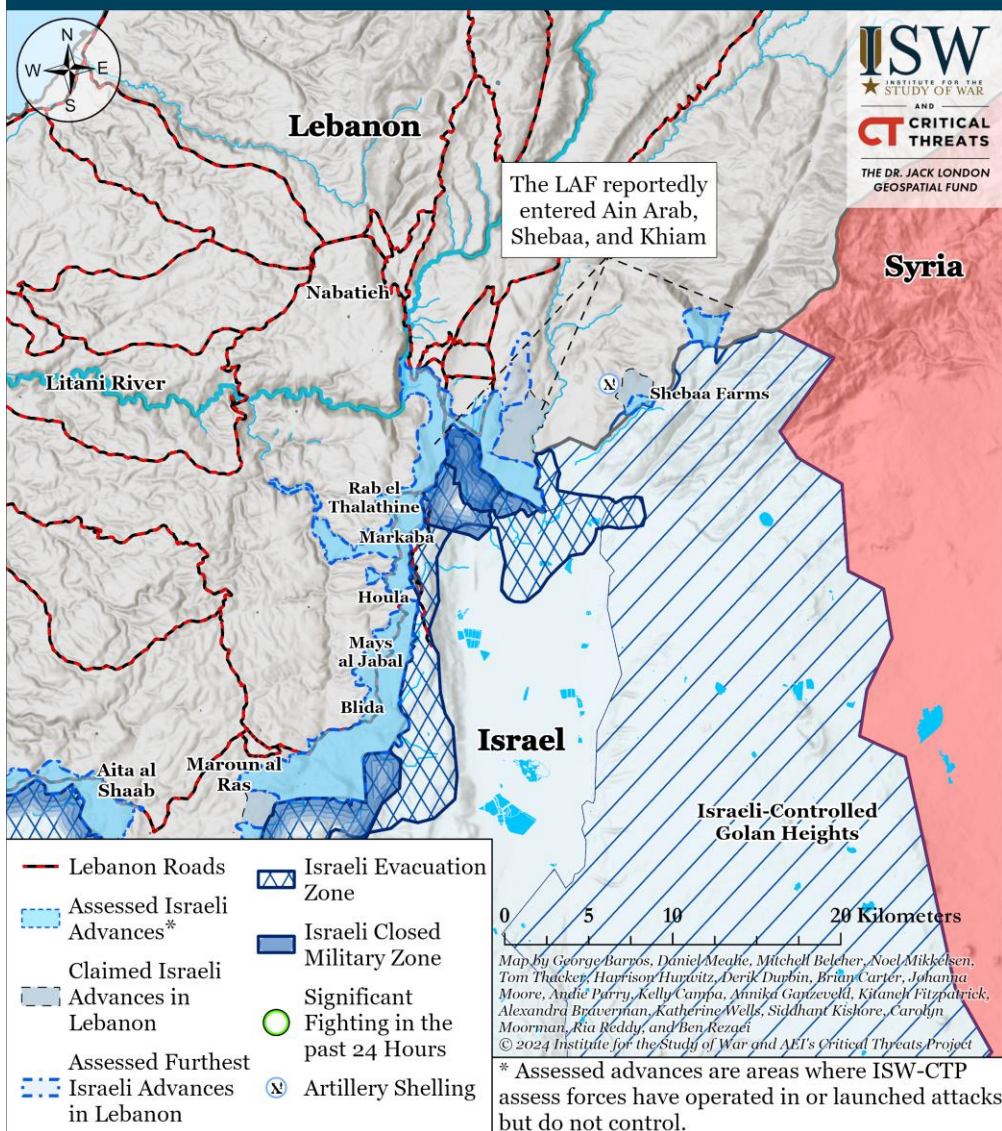
### **Lebanese Hezbollah objectives:**

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

**The IDF reportedly demolished buildings in Kafr Kila, southeastern Lebanon, on December 16.[75]** An Israeli Army Radio correspondent who recently visited Kafr Kila compared the destruction in the village to that in the Gaza Strip.[76]



## Reported Israeli Operations in the Eastern Sector As of December 17, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET

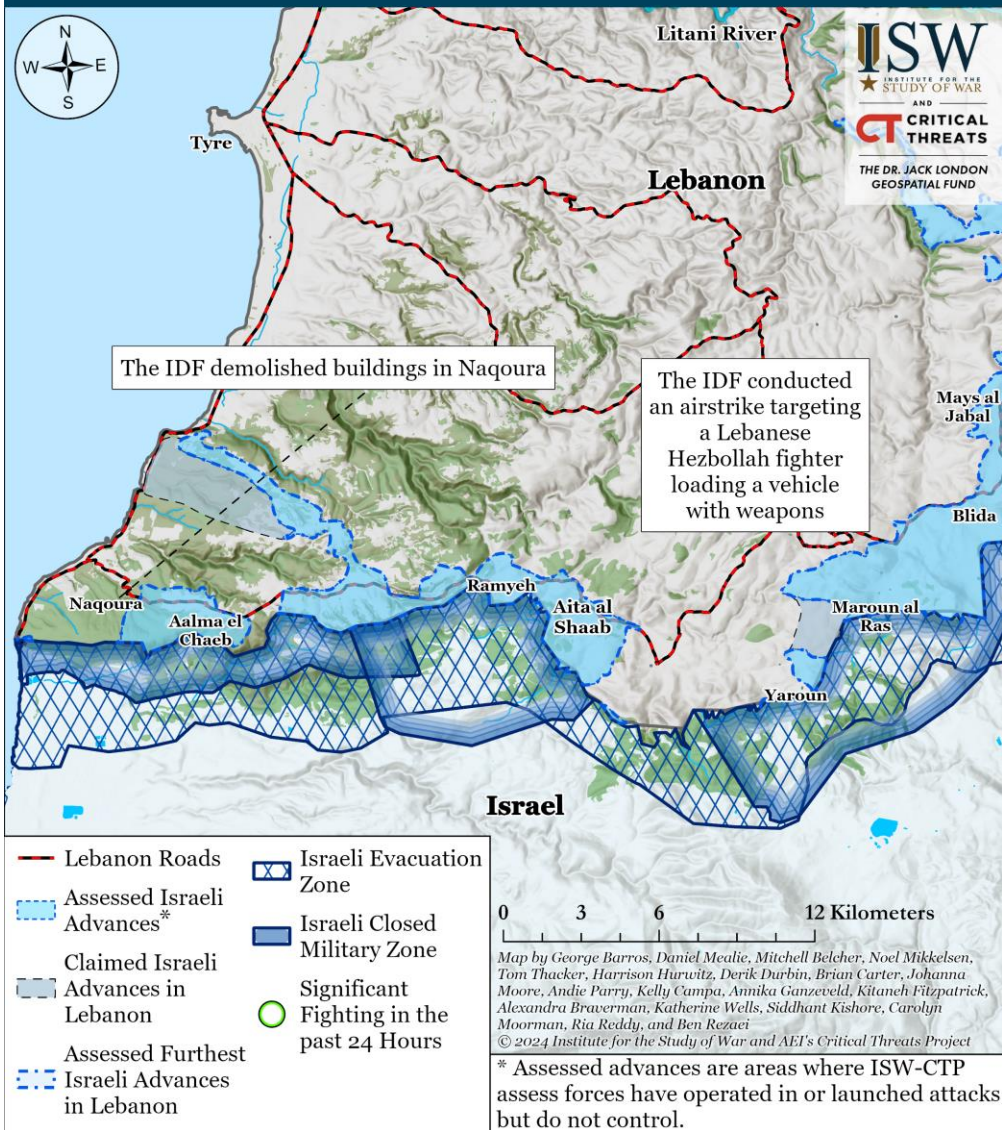


**The IDF continued to demolish buildings in Naqoura on December 17.**<sup>[77]</sup> Lebanese media claimed that Israeli forces approached a UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura and established a position on a hilltop overlooking the facility.<sup>[78]</sup> Imagery posted by Lebanese media appears to show Israeli forces and armor operating from a building on the hilltop near the facility.<sup>[79]</sup>

**The IDF conducted an airstrike targeting a Hezbollah fighter loading a vehicle with weapons on December 18.**<sup>[80]</sup> Hezbollah-affiliated media reported that two individuals were wounded in the airstrike without specifying whether they were Hezbollah fighters.<sup>[81]</sup> The IDF has previously conducted airstrikes in southern Lebanon since the ceasefire went into effect on November 27 targeting Hezbollah fighters.<sup>[82]</sup>

# Reported Israeli Operations in the Western Sector

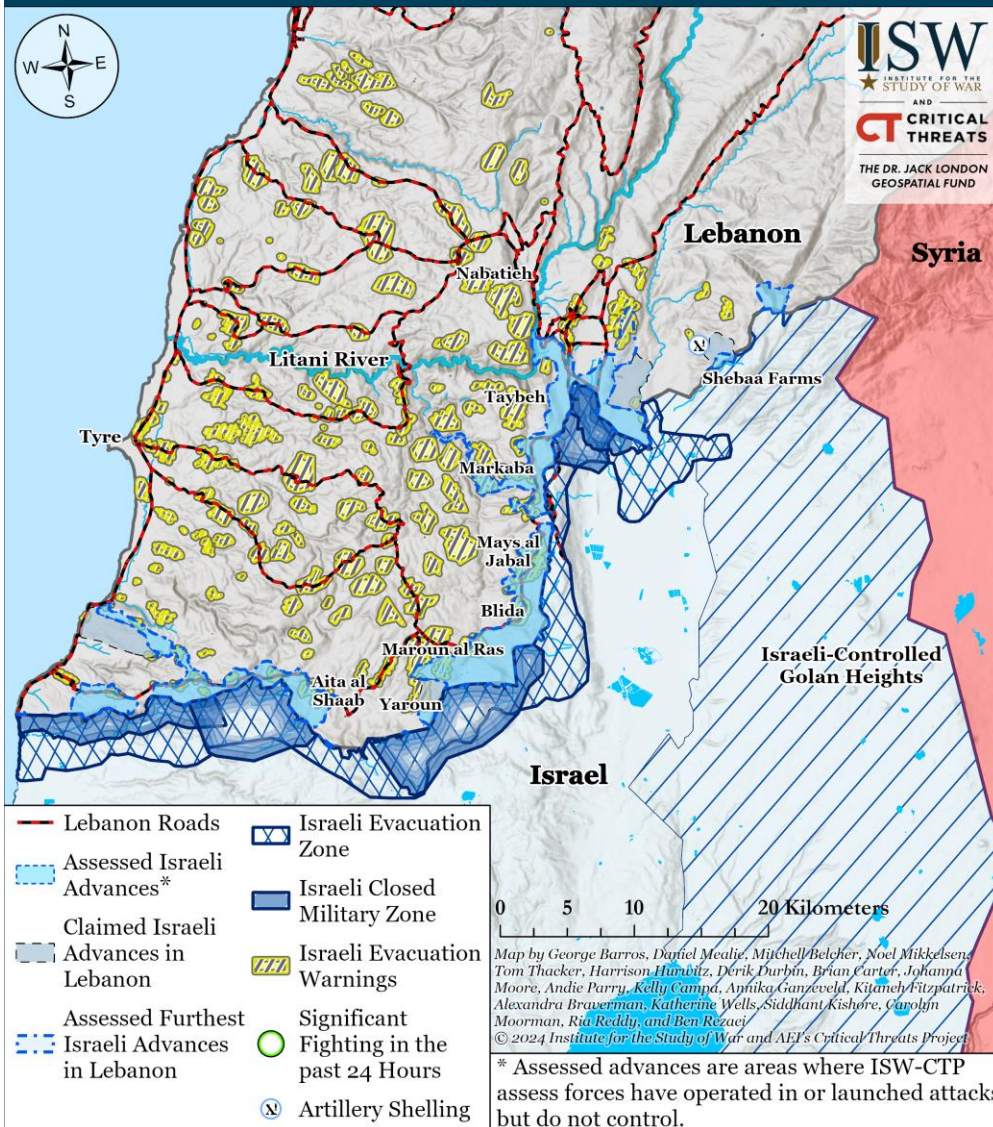
As of December 17, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET





# Reported Israeli Operations in Lebanon

As of December 17, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Hezbollah-affiliated media published an opinion piece arguing that the Lebanese “resistance” must stop Israeli military activity in Syria.[83] The piece suggested that intervention against Israel in Syria was necessary to prevent Israel from undertaking similar activities in Lebanon.

## Iran and the Axis of Resistance

Iraqi Popular Mobilization Committee Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh stated that Iraq “did not and will not” interfere in Syrian affairs during a speech in Kirkuk on December 17.[84] Fayyadh emphasized that the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) is committed to Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani’s “directives and decisions.”[85] The PMF is an Iraqi state security



service that includes a large number of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias.[86] The PMF, on paper, reports directly to Sudani, but in reality, many of the militias that comprise the PMF answer to Iran.[87] Fayyadh similarly called for not intervening in the Syrian conflict at the height of the Syrian opposition offensive in early December 2024, describing the conflict as an “internal event.”[88]

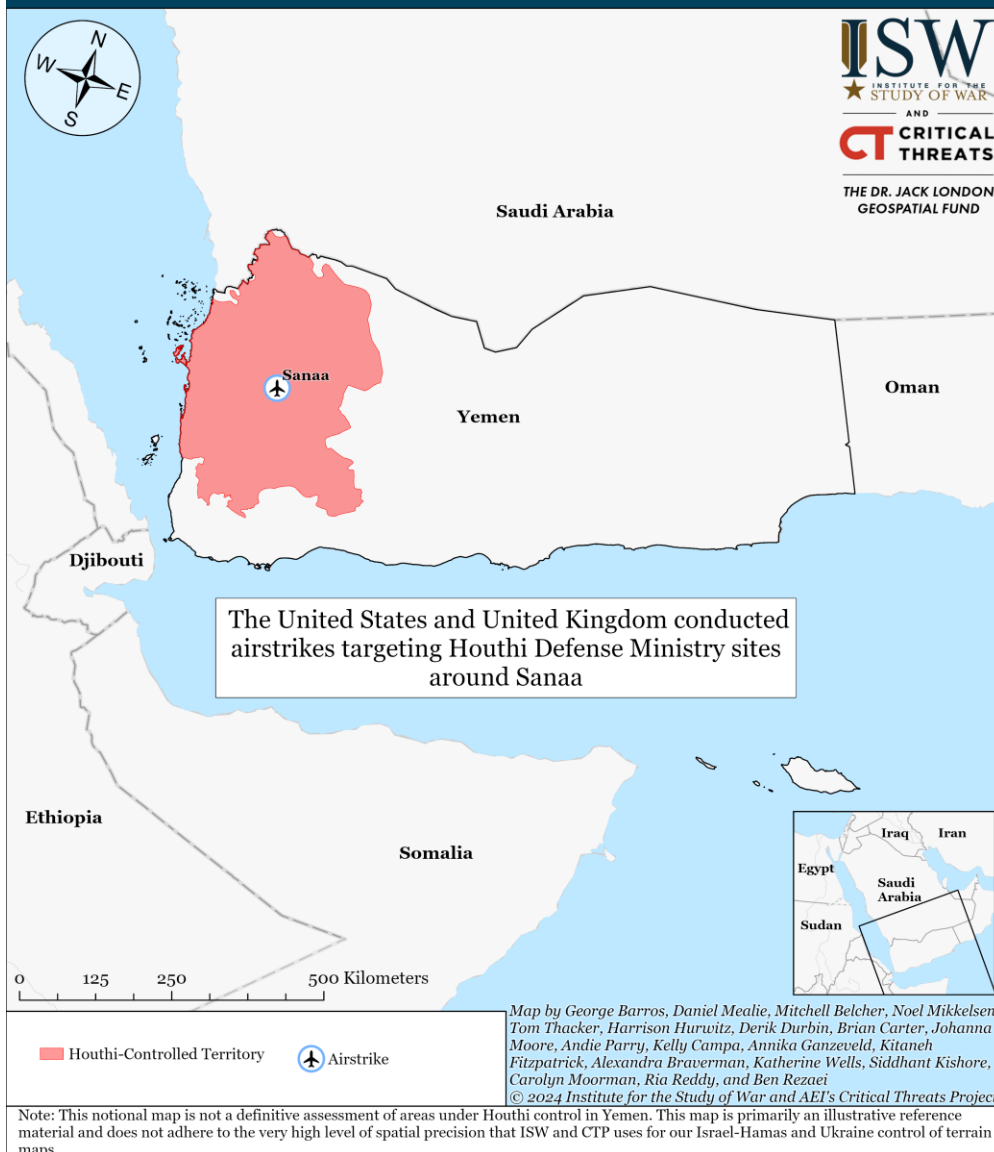
**Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said on December 17 that Syria still has debts to Iran despite the fall of the Assad regime.[89]** Baghaei said the new Syrian government will assume all of the debt that the Assad regime owed to Iran.[90] Estimates of Syria’s debt to Iran vary widely, with figures ranging from 30 billion dollars to claims of 50 billion dollars spent supporting Assad regime since 2011, though no official account of the debt exists.[91]

**Iranian officials have continued to criticize perceived Turkish involvement in the fall of the Assad regime in Syria.** Tehran’s interim prayer leader and Assembly of Experts member Ahmad Khatami called Turkish support for Syrian opposition forces’ takeover of Syria as a “betrayal against Muslims,” who “will come after [Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan],” on December 17.[92] Khatami also called Turkey hypocritical for its inaction against Israel after repeatedly condemning Israeli activity in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. Hardline media outlet Kayhan similarly published an op-ed, which described the Syrian opposition takeover as only a short-term win for Turkey but a “dangerous gamble,” on December 15.[93] Kayhan claimed that the power vacuum has allowed “Israel to occupy Syrian lands” and that Israel will likely try to create a similar political crisis in Jordan that leads to Israel crossing the border. Khatami and Kayhan echoed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s and other Iranian officials’ criticism of the “obvious [Turkish] role” in Syria.[94]

**The United States and United Kingdom conducted an airstrike targeting a key Houthi command-and-control site in Sanaa, Yemen, on December 16.[95]** Local Yemeni sources reported that the US-UK airstrike hit the al Arad complex, which hosts the Houthi-held Defense Ministry, and al Hafa base in Sanaa.[96] US Central Command stated that the Houthis used the targeted site to coordinate attacks against US Navy and merchant vessels in the southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.[97] Houthi officials have vowed a strong response to the US-UK airstrike.[98]

# Houthi Attacks in the Red Sea

As of December 17, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



**International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director Raphael Grossi said the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is “no longer useful” given the continued expansion of the Iranian nuclear program.[99]** Grossi said that Iran has "developed much stronger [nuclear] capabilities" and is "almost at the level of countries that have nuclear weapons." Grossi noted that the IAEA, United States, China, Russia, and European Union will have to "define a system that serves the new Iranian reality." The IAEA reported in November 2024 that Iran continues to develop its nuclear program outside the parameters of the JCPOA.[100] The IAEA report stated that Iran had 182.3 kg of enriched uranium up to 60 percent as of October 26, 2024, which is equivalent to 4.37 significant quantities.[101] The IAEA defines a significant quantity as the “approximate amount of nuclear material for which the possibility of manufacturing a nuclear explosive device cannot be excluded.”[102] These technical developments are especially noteworthy given recent statements from senior Iranian officials encouraging Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to revoke his 2003 fatwa

banning the production and use of nuclear weapons.[103]

*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.*

POWERED BY:



BABEL STREET

---

[1] <https://x.com/ragipsoylu/status/1869087346236502243> ;  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HstiteKxZGQ&ab\\_channel=U.S.DepartmentofState](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HstiteKxZGQ&ab_channel=U.S.DepartmentofState)

[2] [https://x.com/farhad\\_shami/status/1868743814191390920](https://x.com/farhad_shami/status/1868743814191390920) ;  
[https://t.me/Dawn\\_of\\_Freedom1/271](https://t.me/Dawn_of_Freedom1/271)

[3] [https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/u-s-fears-military-buildup-by-turkey-signals-preparations-for-incursion-into-syria-1c2e88e9?mod=middle-east\\_news\\_article\\_pos1](https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/u-s-fears-military-buildup-by-turkey-signals-preparations-for-incursion-into-syria-1c2e88e9?mod=middle-east_news_article_pos1) ;  
<https://t.me/AbomosaabSharkea/129883> ; <https://sdf-press.com/en/2024/12/statement-of-our-sdf-general-command-regarding-the-attacks-of-the-turkish-occupation-and-its-mercenaries-on-kobani/>

[4] <https://x.com/SiyamandAli/status/1869061661870493760> ;  
[https://x.com/farhad\\_shami/status/1869061113540706798](https://x.com/farhad_shami/status/1869061113540706798)

[5] <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/u-s-fears-military-buildup-by-turkey-signals-preparations-for-incursion-into-syria-1c2e88e9>

[6] <https://x.com/thiqanewsagency/status/1868745584104050697>

[7] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-december-13-2024>

[8] <https://x.com/MazloumAbdi/status/1869098729577284034>

[9] <https://sdf-press.com/en/2024/12/statement-of-our-sdf-general-command-regarding-the-attacks-of-the-turkish-occupation-and-its-mercenaries-on-kobani/>

[10] <https://x.com/SOHEB2019/status/1869030380659216801> ;  
<https://t.me/AbomosaabSharkea/129882> ; <https://t.me/AbomosaabSharkea/129854> ;  
<https://t.me/AbomosaabSharkea/129843> ;  
<https://x.com/SOHEB2019/status/1868709894188363782> ;  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-december-11-2024> ;  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-december-10-2024>

[11] <https://sdf-press.com/en/2024/12/statement-of-our-sdf-general-command-regarding-the-attacks-of-the-turkish-occupation-and-its-mercenaries-on-kobani/> ;  
<https://x.com/SOHEB2019/status/1868936839727599799>

[12] GRAPHIC <https://x.com/JulianRoepcke/status/1866436366269321369> ;  
<https://rojavainformationcenter.org/2024/12/update-december-13-and-14-turkish-backed-sna-mobilization-g geared-towards-assault-on-kobane/> ; [https://www.yahoo.com/news/turkish-backed-fighters-accused-executing-134726056.html?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHRocHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAAHNCy4ivh4vUrGoVHNh5ceghm1BgEz4UzzqCsyX4fSplASO7KoKYtgwv1k6h7gvp3h49eMp9VhcIx\\_HY2ThBoHzWrfVClbE-lBHZqpQU4Uz7BGHmva\\_qQbsCiT6FxBxmRX2zFv5mtVffJGvHC2ZSUESGxaDwZivgF42baAIwBuAH](https://www.yahoo.com/news/turkish-backed-fighters-accused-executing-134726056.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHRocHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAHNCy4ivh4vUrGoVHNh5ceghm1BgEz4UzzqCsyX4fSplASO7KoKYtgwv1k6h7gvp3h49eMp9VhcIx_HY2ThBoHzWrfVClbE-lBHZqpQU4Uz7BGHmva_qQbsCiT6FxBxmRX2zFv5mtVffJGvHC2ZSUESGxaDwZivgF42baAIwBuAH) ; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/10/syria-damning-evidence-of-war-crimes-and-other-violations-by-turkish-forces-and-their-allies/> ;

[13] <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1699> ;  
<https://www.yalejournal.org/publications/voices-from-afrin-first-hand-accounts-of-turkish-crimes-against-the-kurds-and-policy-proposals-from-those-affected>

[14] [https://t.me/aleamaliaat\\_aleaskaria/351](https://t.me/aleamaliaat_aleaskaria/351)

[15] [https://t.me/aleamaliaat\\_aleaskaria/351](https://t.me/aleamaliaat_aleaskaria/351)

[16] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/western-governments-expand-contacts-with-syrias-new-leadership-2024-12-17/>

[17] [https://x.com/Mekut\\_Mallet/status/1868737345094402066](https://x.com/Mekut_Mallet/status/1868737345094402066) ;

<https://x.com/azelin/status/1868733772428202149> ;

[https://t.me/aleamaliaat\\_aleaskaria/347](https://t.me/aleamaliaat_aleaskaria/347)

[https://x.com/Israel\\_Alma\\_org/status/1865791697940328541/photo/1](https://x.com/Israel_Alma_org/status/1865791697940328541/photo/1)

[18] <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1699>

[19] [https://t.me/aleamaliaat\\_aleaskaria/350](https://t.me/aleamaliaat_aleaskaria/350) ;

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/2/hayat-tahrir-al-sham-and-the-other-syrian-opposition-groups-in-aleppo> ;



[https://x.com/Israel\\_Alma\\_org/status/1865791697940328541/photo/1](https://x.com/Israel_Alma_org/status/1865791697940328541/photo/1)

[20] <https://www.thetimes.com/world/middle-east/article/abu-mohammed-al-jolani-syria-hts-leader-interview-nmbzoxbov>

[21] <https://www.thetimes.com/world/middle-east/article/abu-mohammed-al-jolani-syria-hts-leader-interview-nmbzoxbov> ; [https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/syria-rebel-leader-abu-mohammed-al-jawlani-interview-9901bof9?mod=middle-east\\_news\\_article\\_pos3](https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/syria-rebel-leader-abu-mohammed-al-jawlani-interview-9901bof9?mod=middle-east_news_article_pos3)

[22] [https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/syria-rebel-leader-abu-mohammed-al-jawlani-interview-9901bof9?mod=middle-east\\_news\\_article\\_pos3](https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/syria-rebel-leader-abu-mohammed-al-jawlani-interview-9901bof9?mod=middle-east_news_article_pos3)

[23] <https://www.thetimes.com/world/middle-east/article/abu-mohammed-al-jolani-syria-hts-leader-interview-nmbzoxbov>

[24] <https://t.me/SyrianArabNewsAgency/119140>

[25] <https://www.thetimes.com/world/middle-east/article/abu-mohammed-al-jolani-syria-hts-leader-interview-nmbzoxbov>

[26] <https://www.thetimes.com/world/middle-east/article/abu-mohammed-al-jolani-syria-hts-leader-interview-nmbzoxbov>

[27] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-december-12-2024>; <https://t.me/SyrianArabNewsAgency/119234>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/czd40pd1g7lo> ; <https://t.me/channelnabatieh/109441>

[28] <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2024/12/16/world/syria-assad-rebels-news/5e0e4e9c-d715-5bdb-a173-a10568ab2dd7?smid=url-share>

[29] [https://www.timesofisrael dot com/liveblog\\_entry/netanyahu-was-at-mount-hermon-today-for-syria-briefing-pms-office-says/](https://www.timesofisrael dot com/liveblog_entry/netanyahu-was-at-mount-hermon-today-for-syria-briefing-pms-office-says/)

[30] [https://www.timesofisrael dot com/liveblog\\_entry/netanyahu-was-at-mount-hermon-today-for-syria-briefing-pms-office-says/](https://www.timesofisrael dot com/liveblog_entry/netanyahu-was-at-mount-hermon-today-for-syria-briefing-pms-office-says/)

[31] [https://www.timesofisrael dot com/liveblog\\_entry/netanyahu-was-at-mount-hermon-today-for-syria-briefing-pms-office-says/](https://www.timesofisrael dot com/liveblog_entry/netanyahu-was-at-mount-hermon-today-for-syria-briefing-pms-office-says/)

[32] [https://x.com/kann\\_news/status/1869042394869674232](https://x.com/kann_news/status/1869042394869674232)

[33] <https://www.jpost dot com/middle-east/article-832540>

[34] [https://x.com/Daraa24\\_24/status/1868986357181194335](https://x.com/Daraa24_24/status/1868986357181194335)

[35] <https://x.com/MarioLeb79/status/1868958145793671543>

[36] [https://x.com/Daraa24\\_24/status/1868981174074257645](https://x.com/Daraa24_24/status/1868981174074257645);  
<https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1868960267658228002>;  
[https://x.com/Daraa24\\_24/status/1868986357181194335](https://x.com/Daraa24_24/status/1868986357181194335)

[37] <https://www.timesofisrael.com/report-syrian-border-villagers-and-rebels-collecting-weapons-and-handing-them-to-idf>;  
<https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-december-15-2024>

[38] <https://www.timesofisrael.com/report-syrian-border-villagers-and-rebels-collecting-weapons-and-handing-them-to-idf>

[39] <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-12-17/ty-article/.premium/villagers-on-syrian-golan-worry-that-israeli-buffer-zone-will-become-long-term-occupation/00000193-d1cd-df9e-a3b7-dfed74320000>

[40] [https://x.com/Daraa24\\_24/status/1868964224736633170](https://x.com/Daraa24_24/status/1868964224736633170)

[41] [https://x.com/Daraa24\\_24/status/1868964224736633170](https://x.com/Daraa24_24/status/1868964224736633170)

[42] <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2024/12/16/the-secret-talks-between-syrias-new-leaders-and-the-kremlin>

[43] <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%91%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%87%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9>;  
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-december-16-2024>

[44] <https://www.politico.eu/article/syria-rebels-russia-bases-brussels-kaja-kallas-bashar-assad/>

[45] [https://t.me/MID\\_Russia/49744](https://t.me/MID_Russia/49744); [https://mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/news/1987700/](https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1987700/)

[46] <https://t.me/damascusv011/26525>; <https://t.me/damascusv011/26528>

[47] <https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/27856>

[48] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/the-reshaping-of-irans-axis-of-resistance>

[49] <https://t.me/damascusv011/26283> ;  
<https://x.com/HalabTodayTV/status/1867942431959683239>

[50] <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-12-17/ty-article/.premium/israel-and-saudi-arabia-reach-normalization-breakthrough-clearing-path-for-hostage-deal/00000193-d5aa-d8ac-ab9f-f5bf29c20000>

[51] <https://hamasinfo.info/2024/12/17/4829/>

- [52] <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/byg04mjrj1#autoplay>
- [53] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/netanyahu-cairo-gaza-ceasefire-deal-expected-coming-days-sources-say-2024-12-17/> ;  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/12/16/hamas-gaza-israel-war-ceasefire-negotiations/>
- [54] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/12/16/hamas-gaza-israel-war-ceasefire-negotiations/>
- [55] <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/09/world/middleeast/israel-hamas-cease-fire-talks.html>
- [56] <https://t.me/hamza20300/318874> ; <https://t.me/hamza20300/318845> ;  
<https://t.me/hamza20300/318848>
- [57] <https://www.idf.il/257296>
- [58] <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC10101202424353>
- [59] <https://www.idf.il/257296>
- [60] <https://t.me/hamza20300/318914> ; <https://t.me/hamza20300/318916>
- [61] [https://t.me/khalaya\\_almujahidin/15017](https://t.me/khalaya_almujahidin/15017)
- [62] <https://t.me/sarayaps/18941> ; <https://t.me/nedalps/4570>
- [63] <https://t.me/hamza20300/319003> ; <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-airstrikes-kill-14-palestinians-gaza-tanks-push-south-2024-12-17/>
- [64] <https://t.me/sarayaps/18946>
- [65] <https://t.me/hamza20300/318922> ; <https://t.me/hamza20300/318935>
- [66] <https://x.com/IDFSpokesperson/status/1868945744574791709> ;  
<https://x.com/IDFSpokesperson/status/1869013020841762936> ;  
[https://x.com/Doron\\_Kadosh/status/1869017033779597708](https://x.com/Doron_Kadosh/status/1869017033779597708)
- [67] [https://x.com/Doron\\_Kadosh/status/1869017033779597708](https://x.com/Doron_Kadosh/status/1869017033779597708)
- [68] <https://t.me/pflpgaza1/14916>
- [69] <https://t.me/hamaswestbank/52551> ; <https://www.reuters.com/world/hamas-fatah-meet-with-media-china-after-reconciliation-talks-2024-07-23/>
- [70] <https://hamasinfo.info/2024/12/05/4696/>
- [71] [https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog\\_entry/idf-announces-new-light-infantry-division-based-on-volunteer-reservists/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-announces-new-light-infantry-division-based-on-volunteer-reservists/)
- [72] <https://www.idf.il/257324>
- [73] <https://t.me/moriahdoron/17630>
- [74] <https://t.me/moriahdoron/17630> ; <https://www.idf.il/257324>



[75] [nna-leb.gov\\_dot\\_lb/ar/justice-law/746432/%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%81-%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%A8%D9%82%D9%89-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%84-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%83%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%84%D8%A7](https://nna-leb.gov_dot_lb/ar/justice-law/746432/%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%81-%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%A8%D9%82%D9%89-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%84-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%83%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%84%D8%A7) ; <https://t.me/channelnabatieh/109469> ; <https://t.me/channelnabatieh/109469> ; <https://t.me/channelnabatieh/109440>

[76] [https://x.com/Doron\\_Kadosh/status/1868704095634436115](https://x.com/Doron_Kadosh/status/1868704095634436115)

[77] <https://x.com/MayadeenEnglish/status/1868964528186442111>

[78] <https://x.com/AlakhbarNews/status/1869063364355190849>

[79] <https://x.com/AlakhbarNews/status/1869063364355190849>

[80] <https://x.com/idfonline/status/18690951046881079266> ; <https://t.me/channelnabatieh/109463>

[81] <https://t.me/almanarnews/186989>

[82] <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1865386102518931823>

[83] [https://www.almanar\\_dot\\_com.lb/12908634](https://www.almanar_dot_com.lb/12908634)

[84] [https://shafaq\\_dot\\_com/ar/%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B6-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B4%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B9%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%85-%D9%88%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%AF%D8%AE%D9%84-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7](https://shafaq_dot_com/ar/%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B6-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B4%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B9%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%85-%D9%88%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%AF%D8%AE%D9%84-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7)

[85] [https://shafaq\\_dot\\_com/ar/%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B6-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B4%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B9%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%85-%D9%88%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%AF%D8%AE%D9%84-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7](https://shafaq_dot_com/ar/%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B6-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B4%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B9%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%85-%D9%88%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%AF%D8%AE%D9%84-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7)

[86] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/leadership-and-purpose-iraq%E2%80%99s-popular-mobilization-forces>

[87] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/leadership-and-purpose-iraq%E2%80%99s-popular-mobilization-forces>

[88] [https://t.me/teamsmediawar\\_1/107037](https://t.me/teamsmediawar_1/107037)

[89] [https://www.entekhab\\_dot\\_ir/fa/news/839275](https://www.entekhab_dot_ir/fa/news/839275)

[90] [https://www.entekhab\\_dot\\_ir/fa/news/839275](https://www.entekhab_dot_ir/fa/news/839275)

[91] <https://amwaj.media/article/deep-dive-syria-s-foreign-debt-to-iran>  
[https://www.iranintl\\_dot\\_com/202412079323](https://www.iranintl_dot_com/202412079323)

[92] [https://www.mehrnews\\_dot\\_com/news/6319562](https://www.mehrnews_dot_com/news/6319562)

[93] <https://kayhan dot ir/fa/news/301758>

[94] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-december-11-2024>

[95] <https://x.com/CENTCOM/status/1868783918054273050>

[96] <https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/1868783700307251593> ;

<https://www.saba dot ye/ar/news3410340.htm>

[97] <https://x.com/CENTCOM/status/1868783918054273050>

[98] <https://www.saba dot ye/ar/news3410340.htm> ;

<https://x.com/TvAlmasirah/status/1869066063197126790>

[99] [https://www.ansa dot it/sito/notizie/mondo/2024/12/16/grossiaiea-serve-nuovo-accordo-nucleare-con-iran\\_eb4c2968-eb9a-499d-92ab-11b08edba315.html](https://www.ansa dot it/sito/notizie/mondo/2024/12/16/grossiaiea-serve-nuovo-accordo-nucleare-con-iran_eb4c2968-eb9a-499d-92ab-11b08edba315.html)

[100] <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/24/11/gov2024-61.pdf>

[101] <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/24/11/gov2024-61.pdf> ; <https://isis-online.org/isis-reports/detail/entering-uncharted-waters-irans-60-percent-highly-enriched-uranium#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20International%20Atomic,nuclear%20explosive%20cannot%20be%20excluded.%E2%80%9D>

[102] <https://isis-online.org/isis-reports/detail/analysis-of-iaea-iran-verification-and-monitoring-report-august-2024>

[103] [https://x.com/Ahmadnaderi\\_ir/status/1865703381123084489](https://x.com/Ahmadnaderi_ir/status/1865703381123084489) ;  
<https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-9-2024> ;  
<https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-august-21-2024>