Iran Update, February 13, 2024

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Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm EST

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events. For more on developments in Iran and the region, see our [interactive map of Iran and the Middle East](#).
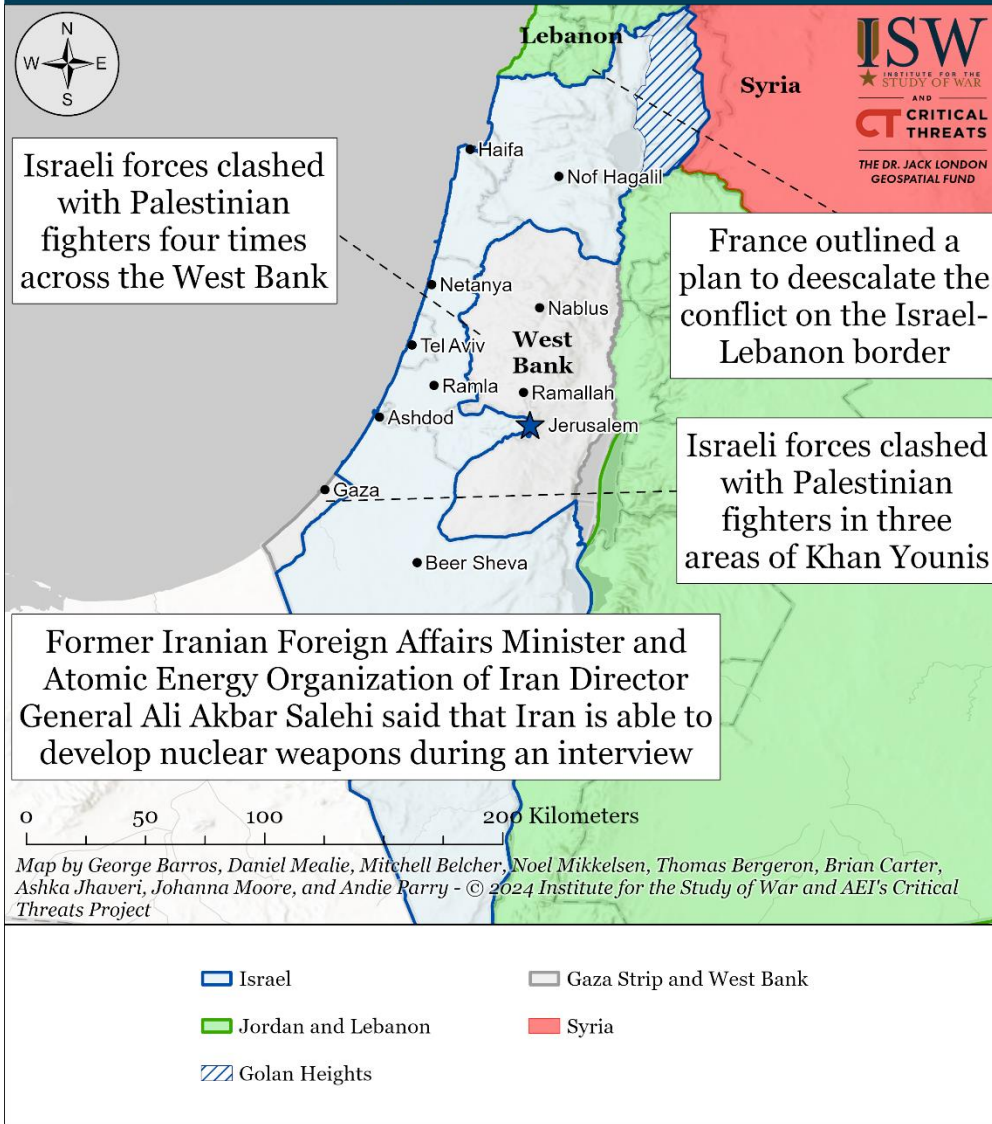
Note: CTP and ISW have refocused the update to cover the Israel-Hamas war. The new sections address developments in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as noteworthy activity from Iran's Axis of Resistance. We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report. Click [here](#) to subscribe to the Iran Update.

Key Takeaways:

- **Southern Gaza Strip:** Israel presented a proposal to move displaced Gazans in Rafah to Egyptian-built tent cities in the southwestern Gaza Strip, according to the Wall Street Journal.

- **Negotiations:** Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan claimed on February 12 that Egyptian and Qatar mediators believe that the Hamas ceasefire proposal that Qatar delivered to Israel "opened a way to reach an agreement."

- Hamdan reiterated Hamas' longstanding requirements for a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip, which include the withdrawal of Israeli forces, the end of Israeli military operations, humanitarian aid and reconstruction, and a hostage-for-prisoner exchange deal.

- **Lebanon:** France outlined a three-step plan to deescalate the conflict on the Israel-Lebanon border and force Lebanese Hezbollah to withdraw six miles from the Israeli border.

- **Iran:** Former Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister and Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Director General Ali Akbar Salehi said during an interview on February 11 that Iran is able to develop nuclear weapons.

Israel-Hamas War as of February 13, 2024, 2:00 PM ET

Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian fighters four times across the West Bank

France outlined a plan to deescalate the conflict on the Israel-Lebanon border

Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian fighters in three areas of Khan Younis

Former Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister and Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Director General Ali Akbar Salehi said that Iran is able to develop nuclear weapons during an interview

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

Legend: Israel | Gaza Strip and West Bank | Jordan and Lebanon | Syria | Golan Heights

Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

Palestinian militias did not claim any attacks targeting the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in the northern Gaza Strip on February 13. IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi said that the IDF would continue to operate in the northern Gaza Strip.[1] He added that the northern Gaza Strip remains "isolated" from the remainder of the Strip because the IDF does not want civilians to reenter areas where Palestinian militia fighters are continuing to operate.[2] The al Quds Brigades posted footage of the group's previous targeting of Israeli forces in western Gaza City but did not claim new attacks.[3]

The Nahal Brigade (operating under the 162nd Division) killed at least 10 Palestinian fighters in the central Gaza Strip, including a Palestinian anti-tank cell.[4]

Israeli forces continued operations in several areas of Khan Younis Governorate. Israeli forces concentrated on clearing western Khan Younis between January 22 and February 10.[5] Palestinian militias have resumed attacking Israeli forces in eastern, southern, and northern Khan Younis governorate after February 8. The militias focused most of their attacks in western Khan Younis between January 25 and February 8.[6]

Palestinian militias attacked Israeli forces north of Khan Younis on February 13. Hamas conducted at least four attacks on Israeli personnel and armor in the al Qarara area, north of Khan Younis on February 13, including a house-borne improvised explosive device attack targeting Israeli forces as they entered a home there.[7] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fighters also targeted Israeli forces with small arms in northern Khan Younis.[8]

Israeli forces continued clearing operations in western Khan Younis and clashed with Palestinian fighters there. The IDF 7th Brigade (assigned to the 36th Division) raided militia infrastructure, conducted patrols, and killed over thirty Palestinian fighters in western Khan Younis.[9] The 35th Paratrooper Brigade (assigned to the 98th Division) killed two Palestinian fighters in western Khan Younis who were hiding among civilians to disguise their movement.[10] Local Palestinian sources reported that Israeli forces advanced to the gates of the Nasser Hospital in western Khan Younis on February 13 and ordered the occupants to evacuate the grounds.[11]

The 646th Brigade (assigned to the 99th Division) engaged Palestinian fighters and captured Hamas weapons caches during clearing operations in Abasan al Saghira, east of Khan Younis, during the last week.[12] The 646th Brigade evacuated thousands of civilians from a humanitarian shelter that Hamas fighters were using for refuge. The 646th Brigade detained and killed dozens of Palestinian fighters as the fighters attempted to evacuate alongside the civilians in the shelter.[13]

Palestinian fighters attempted to defend against the 646th Brigade's operations in Abasan al Saghira. Palestinian fighters detonated a house-borne improvised explosive device that killed three Israeli soldiers, including a battalion commander, during the brigade's operations in the town on February 13.[14] Hamas fighters also fired small arms targeting seven 646th Brigade soldiers in Abasan al Saghira on the same day.[15]

Israel presented a proposal to move displaced Gazans in Rafah to Egyptian-built tent cities in the southwestern Gaza Strip, according to the *Wall Street*

Journal.[16] Unspecified Egyptian officials said the Israeli proposal plan would obligate Egypt to 15 camps in the Gaza Strip containing 375,000 tents with funding from the United States and unspecified Arab partners. The camps would contain medical clinics, and Israel would coordinate with Egypt to permit the evacuation of wounded Gazans. The Israeli and Egyptian governments did not comment on the alleged proposal. The IDF Chief of Staff stated on February 13 that Rafah contains an estimated 10,000 Hamas fighters and over a million displaced Palestinian civilians, which requires the IDF to evacuate Rafah before beginning major clearing operations in the city.[17]

Israel is also considering other plans to evacuate the population from Rafah. Israel's public broadcaster reported that Israel is considering other plans to enable operations in Rafah by evacuating the population from Rafah to Khan Younis or by allowing some civilians to return to designated zones in the northern Gaza Strip.[18] The IDF Chief of Staff said that the IDF would not allow northern Gaza residents to return as long as militant activity persists in the northern Gaza Strip, however.[19]

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan claimed on February 12 that Egyptian and Qatar mediators believe that the Hamas ceasefire proposal that Qatar delivered to Israel "opened a way to reach an agreement."[20] Hamdan reiterated Hamas' longstanding requirements for a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip, which include the withdrawal of Israeli forces, the end of Israeli military operations, humanitarian aid and reconstruction, and a hostage-for-prisoner exchange deal.[21] An unspecified Hamas source told CNN on February 13 that the next 24 hours are critical to the ceasefire negotiations.[22] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected Hamas' previous three-stage ceasefire and hostage exchange proposal on February 7.[23] Hamas' February 7 proposal is the last publicly acknowledged proposal. The United States, Egypt, and Qatar are continuing to mediate negotiations between Israel and Hamas.[24]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of February 13, 2024, 2:00 PM ET
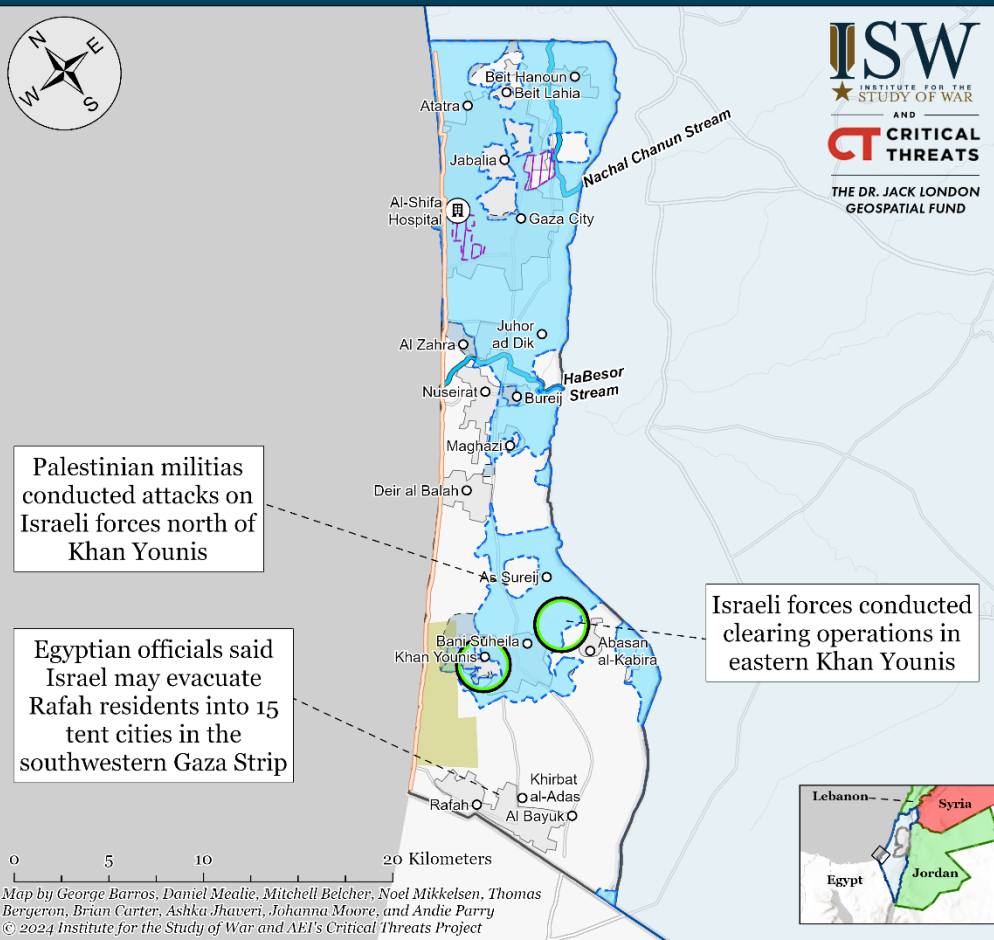
Palestinian militias conducted attacks on Israeli forces north of Khan Younis

Egyptian officials said Israel may evacuate Rafah residents into 15 tent cities in the southwestern Gaza Strip

Israeli forces conducted clearing operations in eastern Khan Younis

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry
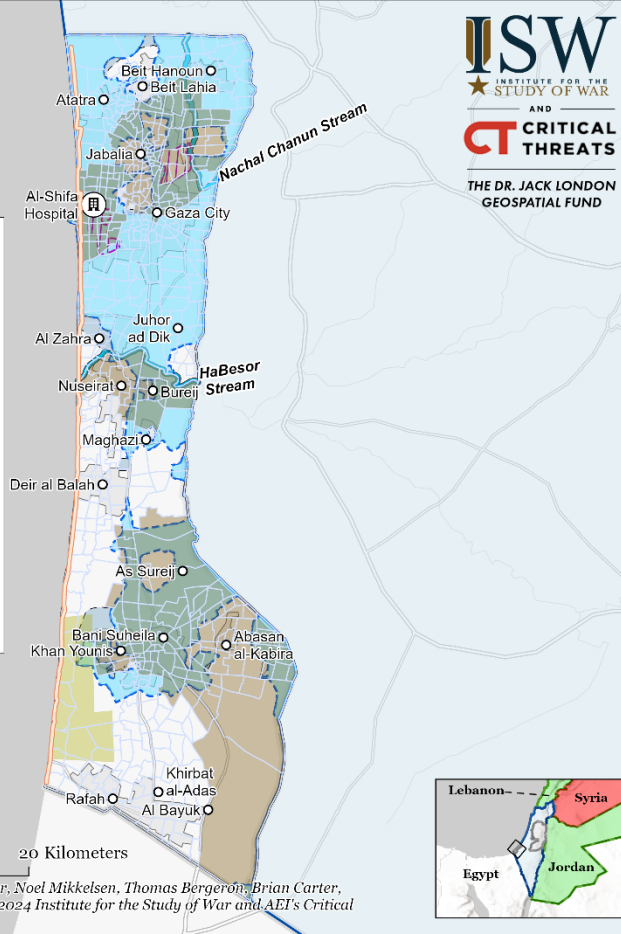© 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

Legend:
- Israel
- Gaza Strip
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Syria
- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
- Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- Z Z Areas Reportedly Infiltrated by Palestinian Militias
- Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
- IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridor on Road 230
- Significant Water Obstacles
- Densely Urban Areas
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours

* 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 February 13, 2024, 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)

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project
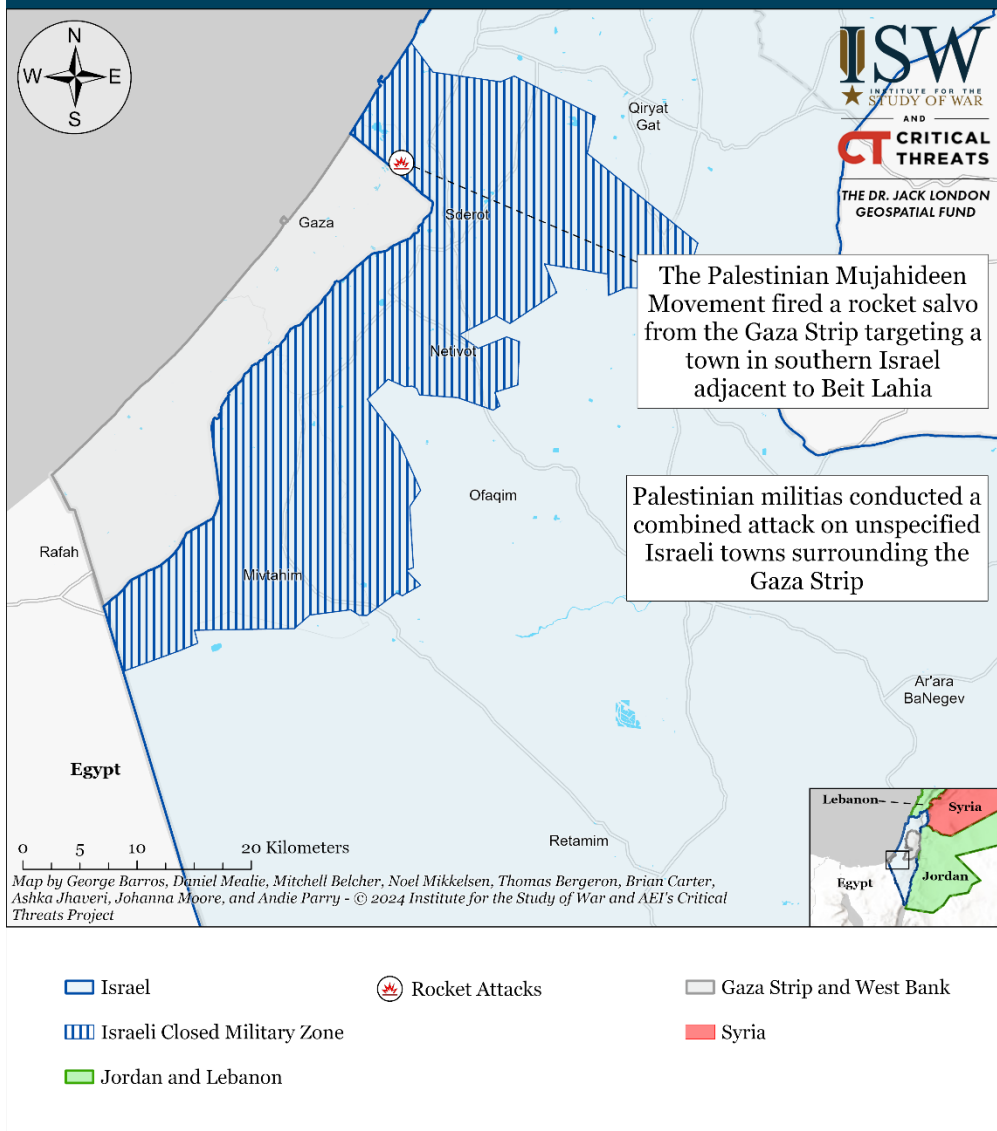
Israel	Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*	Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones
Gaza Strip	Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances	Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
Jordan and Lebanon		Densely Urban Areas
Syria	Areas Reportedly Infiltrated by Palestinian Militias	IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridor on Road 230
		Significant Water Obstacles

* 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

Palestinian militias launched at least two rocket salvoes from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel on February 13. The Palestinian Mujahideen Movement fired a rocket salvo from the Gaza Strip into a town in southern Israeli adjacent to Beit Lahia.[25] The Palestinian Mujahideen Movement and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) fired an unspecified number of rocket salvoes at unspecified Israeli towns near the Gaza Strip.[26]

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of February 13, 2024, 2:00 PM ET

The Palestinian Mujahideen Movement fired a rocket salvo from the Gaza Strip targeting a town in southern Israel adjacent to Beit Lahia

Palestinian militias conducted a combined attack on unspecified Israeli towns surrounding the Gaza Strip

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

Legend:
- Israel
- Rocket Attacks
- Gaza Strip and West Bank
- Israeli Closed Military Zone
- Syria
- Jordan and Lebanon

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

West Bank

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian fighters four times across the West Bank on February 13.[27] Israeli security forces shot and captured one attacker who attempted to run over civilians with his vehicle near Gush Etzion.[28] The IDF detained 18 wanted individuals across the West Bank on February 13.[29] The IDF separately reported that Israeli security forces detained a Hamas fighter in Jenin. The IDF described the fighter as the head of "Hamas' military infrastructure in Jenin".[30]

Clashes in the West Bank as of February 13, 2024, 2:00 PM ET

The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed three attacks targeting Israeli security forces

Legend:
- ☐ Israel
- ☐ Jordan and Lebanon
- ⊕ Clash (Small Arms Combat)
- ◈ IED Detonated
- ☐ Gaza Strip and West Bank
- ☐ Syria

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

Iranian-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted six attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel on February 13.[31] Hezbollah fired anti-tank guided missiles targeting Kiryat Shmona. The Hezbollah attack targeting Kiryat Shmona injured two Israeli civilians.[32]
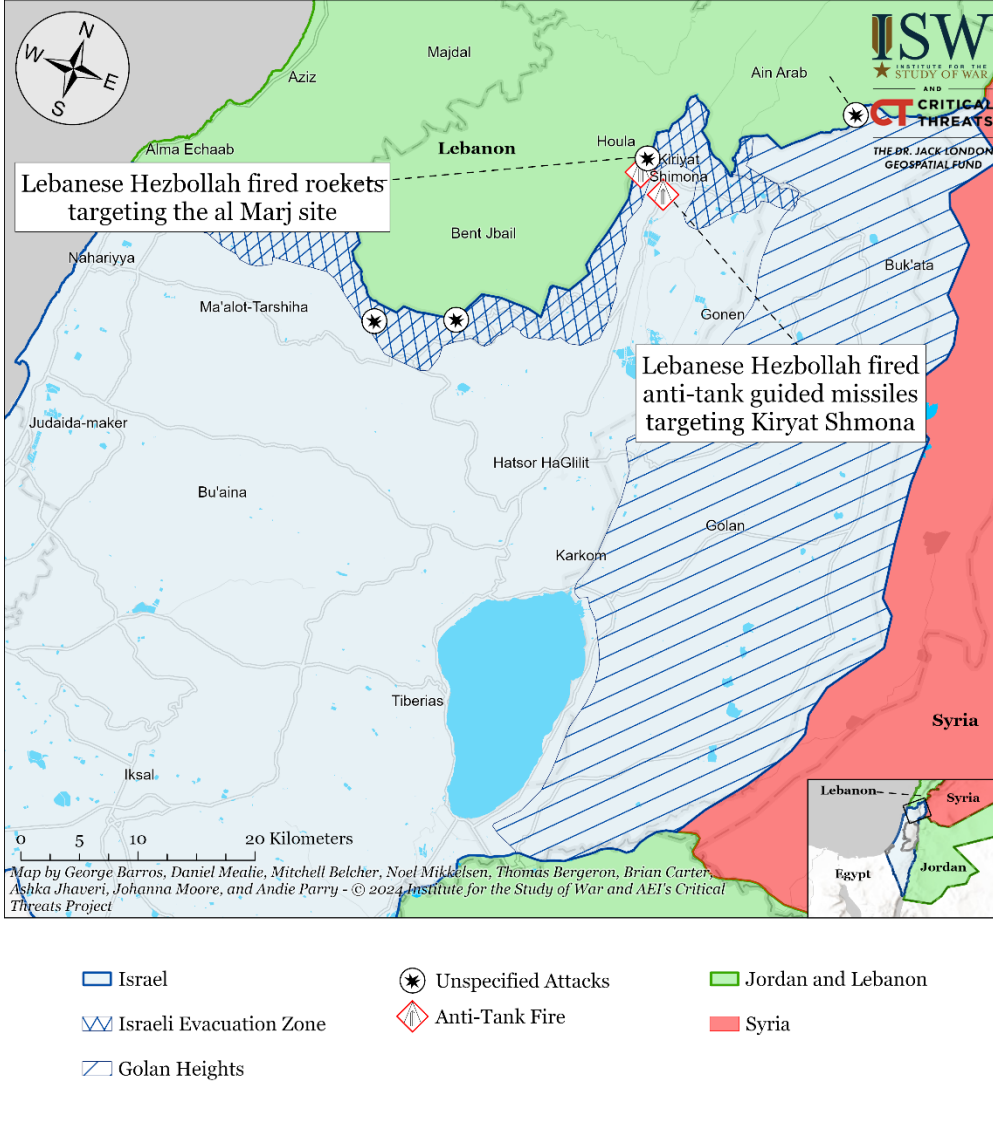
France outlined a three-step plan to deescalate the conflict on the Israel-Lebanon border and force Lebanese Hezbollah to withdraw six miles from the Israeli border.[33] An unspecified French diplomat told Reuters that France delivered the proposal to Israel, the Lebanese government, and Hezbollah.[34] The proposal calls on Israel and Hezbollah to end military operations—including airstrikes and cross-border attacks—along the Israel-Lebanon border. Hezbollah would then withdraw at least six miles north of the border. The Lebanese Armed Forces would backfill Hezbollah to serve as a buffer between the border and Hezbollah forces. Israel and Lebanon would resume negotiations to demarcate the border between the two countries in the plan's third stage. A Hezbollah official said in response that the group would not negotiate until Israel stopped military operations in the Gaza Strip.[35]

Lebanese Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah gave a speech on the state of the Israel-Hamas war on February 13. Nasrallah said that Hezbollah will not escalate against Israel unless Israel escalates against Hezbollah.[36] He added that Hezbollah will continue its attacks into northern Israel until Israel ends its operations in the Gaza Strip.[37] Nasrallah demanded that the Lebanese government set "new conditions" on UN Security Council 1701. Nasrallah said the government should not "implement" 1701, which says that Hezbollah cannot deploy military forces south of the Litani River.[38]

Israeli media reported on February 13 that Lebanese Hezbollah has incorporated hundreds of Palestinian Islamic Jihad fighters in Syria into Hezbollah's Radwan Force.[39] The Radwan Force is an elite Hezbollah unit. Hezbollah has enabled Palestinian militias to conduct attacks targeting Israel from southern Lebanon since the war began.[40]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon as of February 13, 2024, 2:00 PM ET

Lebanese Hezbollah fired rockets targeting the al Marj site

Lebanese Hezbollah fired anti-tank guided missiles targeting Kiryat Shmona

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

Legend:
- Israel
- Israeli Evacuation Zone
- Golan Heights
- Unspecified Attacks
- Anti-Tank Fire
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Syria

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

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Demonstrate the capability and willingness of Iran and the Axis of Resistance to escalate against the United States and Israel on multiple fronts

- Set conditions to fight a regional war on multiple fronts

The Russian Ambassador to Iraq offered condolences to the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Commission Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh for the deaths of Popular Mobilization Forces members in the February 2 US airstrikes.[41] The February 2 airstrikes targeted two Iranian-backed Iraqi militias in Anbar and Babil provinces.[42]

Iranian militias transported weapons from Iraq through the unofficial and Iranian-backed militia-controlled al Sikka crossing into Syria on February 13.[43] The Iranian-backed Iraqi militia group Liwa al Tafuf facilitates the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)'s movement between Iraq and Syria and weapons shipments into Albu Kamal, Syria from Iraq.[44] The United States targeted Liwa al Tafuf and the al Sikka crossing on February 2 in response to the January 28 Iranian-backed attack in Jordan that killed three US servicemembers.[45]

Israel likely conducted a drone strike targeting an IRGC missile storage facility in al Mayadin, Deir ez Zor Province, Syria on February 13.[46] Israel has conducted a series of airstrikes during the Israel-Hamas War targeting IRGC and IRGC-affiliated military facilities, weapons warehouses, and personnel in Syria. These strikes are Israel's response to Iranian attempts to accelerate weapons shipments to Lebanese Hezbollah through Syria.[47]

Local Syrian media reported that unspecified Iran-backed militias targeted US forces stationed at the al Omar oil field in eastern Syria on February 13.[48] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—has regularly conducted drone and rocket attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria since October 18, 2023, but it did not claim this attack.[49]

The IRGC fired short and medium-range ballistic missiles from a forward base ship in the Gulf of Oman toward central Iran during a military exercise on February 12.[50] The IRGC Navy and Aerospace Force launched the missiles from the *Shahid Mahdavi* forward base ship using a launcher disguised as a shipping container.[51] The ability to launch ballistic missiles from a containerized launcher means that Iran has the capability to hide the launcher on otherwise unassuming, civilian container ships. Iran could use these container ships as commerce raiders to attack merchant shipping and disrupt maritime traffic without a requirement for land-based launchers.[52] Iranian officials and media used this event to signal the IRGC's ability to directly target Iran's adversaries, including Israel.[53]

Former Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister and Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Director General Ali Akbar Salehi said during an interview on February 11 that Iran is able to develop nuclear weapons.[54] Salehi claimed that Iran has the components it requires to make nuclear weapons and noted that these parts have non-weapons related purposes. Salehi was responding to a state television presenter's question about Iran's ability to build a nuclear weapon. International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Grossi called for transparency from the Iranian nuclear program and expressed concern over Salehi's remarks during the World Government Summit in Dubai on February 13.[55]

An unspecified Iranian official and "two others briefed on the matter" told Western media on February 13 that the IRGC recalled its senior commanders from Syria ahead of US strikes on February 2.[56] The unspecified Iranian official told the Financial Times that Iran

sought to avoid direct confrontation with the United States by recalling its commanders. The *New York Times* similarly reported on February 2 that Iran recalled its senior commanders from Iraq and Syria ahead of the US strikes.[57] The United States struck over 85 IRGC Quds Force and Iranian-backed militia targets in Iraq and Syria on February 2 in response to the January 28 Iranian-backed attack in Jordan that killed three US servicemembers.[58]

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian implied that Israel will not achieve its war time goals in a meeting with Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh. Abdollahian implied the Israel will not achieve its goals, citing Hamas' participation in "political negotiations" with Israel, the United States, Qatar, and Egypt.**[59]** Abdollahian claimed that the United States and Israel recognize Hamas as a "party to political negotiations" in the war and the group's "irreplaceable role and position. He also "praised" the Axis of Resistance for its "brave support" of the Palestinian people.

Abdollahian is using his ongoing regional tour to coordinate politically with Axis of Resistance leaders, including Haniyeh. Abdollahian met with Lebanese Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut on February 10.[60] He separately met with senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine officials in Beirut on the same date.

Abdollahian separately met with the Qatari prime minister and foreign affairs minister and the Qatari emir in separate meetings in Doha on February 13.[61] Abdollahian and the Qatari leaders discussed a political solution to the Israel-Hamas war in both meetings. The Qatari prime minister and foreign affairs minister stressed the necessity contain the scope of the war.[62] This marks Abdollahian's fifth trip to Doha since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.[63]

***Barron's* reported that Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK)-affiliated hackers said that they conducted a cyberattack targeting the Iranian parliament's website and the Iranian parliament-affiliated news agency.[64]** The United States listed the MEK as a foreign terrorist organization between 1997 and 2012.[65] MEK claimed that it penetrated 600 Parliament-affiliated servers. The group published hundreds of pages of material that it acquired during the cyberattack on its Telegram channel.

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[2] https://www.idf dot il/180294

[3] https://t.me/sarayaps/17431

[4] https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1757300500414845254 ; https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1757307845983244404

[5] https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1749460612860592320 ;

https://twitter.com/Doron_Kadosh/status/1756577961585565893

[6] https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1749460612860592320

[7] https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1605 ; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1606 ; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1607 ; https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1608

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[9] https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1757300437898633384 ; https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1757307845983244404

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[14] https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1603 ; www dot idf.il/180285 ; https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1757254830953738715

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