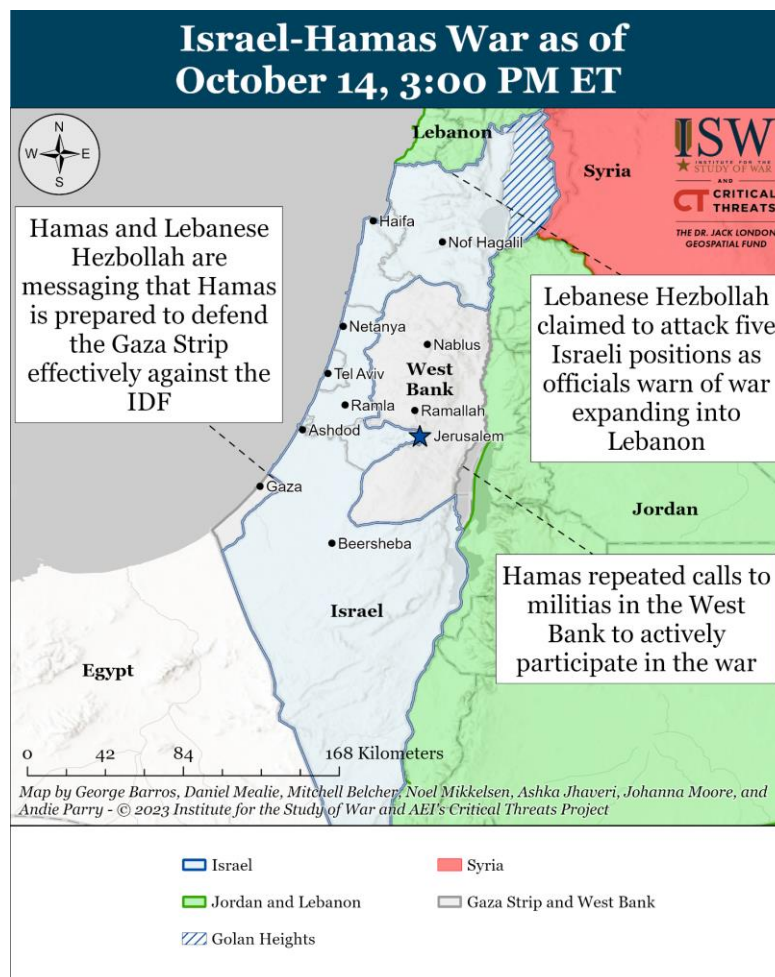


Iran Update

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October 14, 2023

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 and in Iran and the region, see our [interactive map of Iran and the Middle East](#).

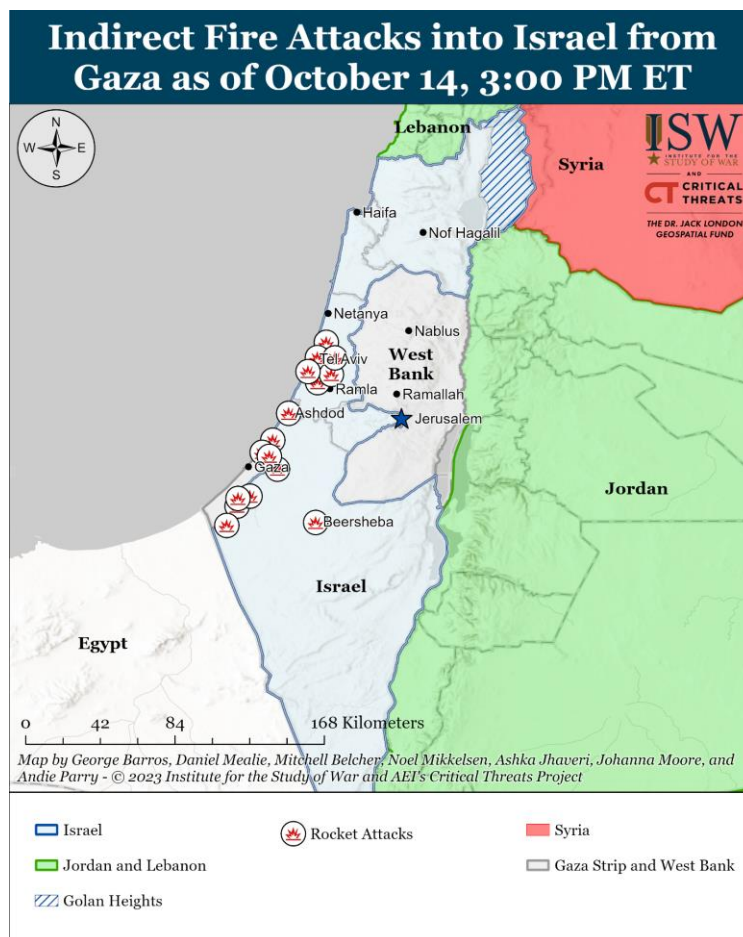
Note: CTP and ISW have refocused the update to cover the Israel-Hamas war. The new sections address developments in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as noteworthy activity from Iran's Axis of Resistance. We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered 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, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.



Key Takeaways:

1. Hamas continued its ground and rocket attacks into Israel, primarily southern Israel. Palestinian militants are continuing limited attempts to infiltrate southern Israel via land and sea.
2. Clashes in the West Bank between Israeli forces and Palestinian militias decreased after peaking on October 13. Hamas remains committed to expanding the war to the West Bank, however.
3. Lebanese Hezbollah claimed attacks on the IDF for the second consecutive day as part of its ongoing harassment of Israeli forces. LH messaging indicates that the group will conduct additional attacks against Israeli forces in the coming days.
4. Iran and elements of its Axis of Resistance are messaging that the Hamas-Israel war could expand geographically into a multi-front conflict. CTP-ISW is closely monitoring the situation to forecast whether such a scenario is becoming more or less likely.
5. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abdollahian traveled to Qatar, likely to meet with Hamas leadership and discuss Iranian financial assets with Qatari officials.

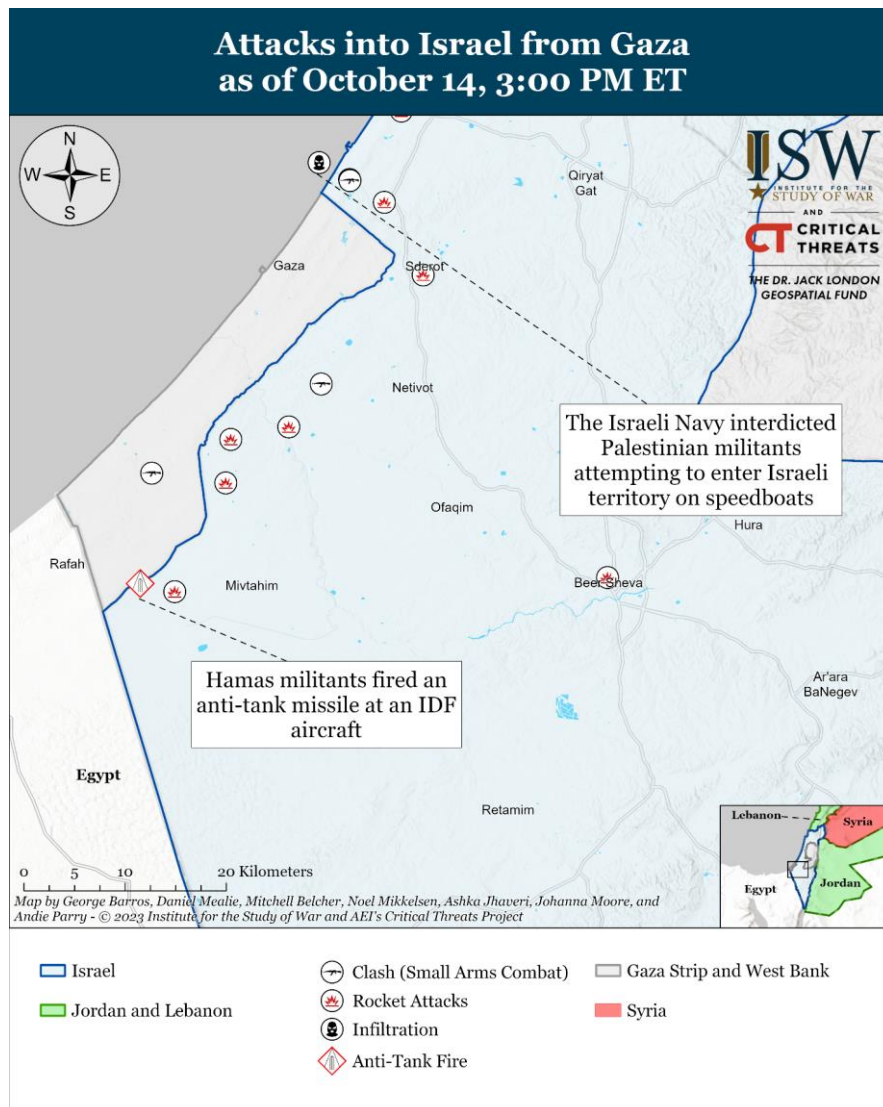
Gaza Strip



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

Hamas continued its ground and rocket attacks into Israel, primarily southern Israel, on October 14. The al Qassem Brigades—Hamas’ militant wing—claimed responsibility for conducting rocket attacks on 12 locations, including Tel Aviv.¹ Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for launching rockets on seven locations in southern Israel.² Hamas has reduced its rate of rocket fire into Israeli territory since October 12 to conserve its stockpile and prepare for a prolonged war.³

Palestinian militants are continuing limited attempts to infiltrate southern Israel via land and sea. Militants engaged in small arms clashes with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) at least four times in Israeli territory surrounding the Gaza Strip on October 14. These militants used an anti-tank missile in one of these instances.⁴ The IDF Navy separately interdicted speedboats trying to enter Israeli territory.⁵ Hamas previously used speedboats to launch its assault into Israeli territory on October 7.⁶



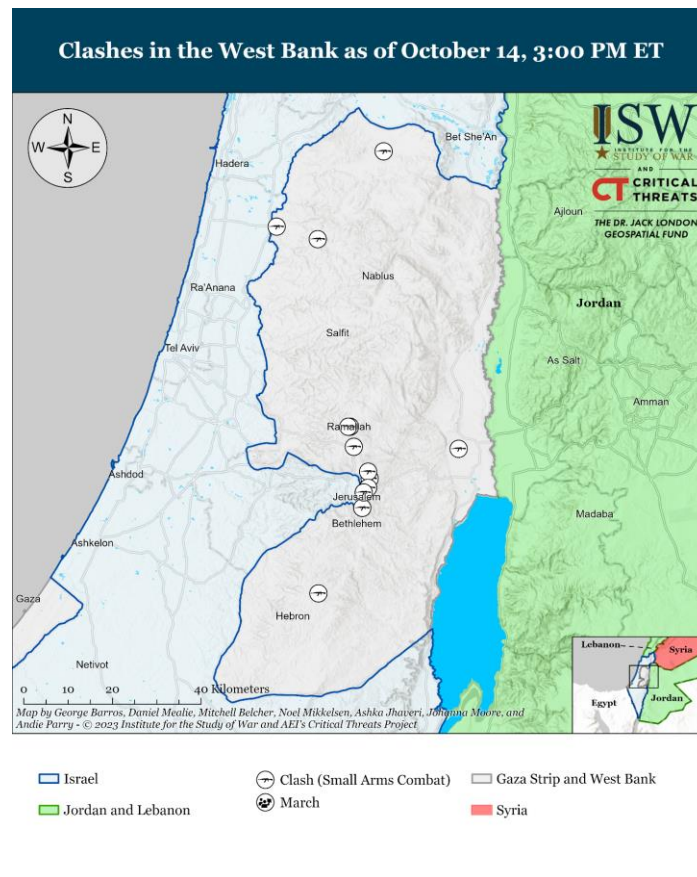
Recorded reports of rocket fire; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Hamas and Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) are messaging that Hamas is prepared to defend the Gaza Strip effectively against the IDF. Hamas published messages on October 14 boasting about its anti-armor

capabilities and defensive preparations.⁷ LH-affiliated *al Mayadeen* similarly published remarks from an unspecified Palestinian militant stating that Palestinian militias have a comprehensive defense plan for the Gaza Strip.⁸ The militant also stated that the militias have enough manpower and weapons to fight the IDF for months in the Gaza Strip. Below are some of the factors that Hamas could exploit in fighting the IDF in the Gaza Strip.

- Hamas maintains around 480 kilometers of tunnels under the strip.⁹ The *Washington Institute for Near East Policy* wrote that “Hamas has had 15 years to prepare a dense ‘defense in depth’ that integrates subterranean, ground-level, and aboveground fortifications.”¹⁰ Hamas could use these tunnels to quickly maneuver around the battlespace and facilitate the movement of fighters and weapons.
- Hamas has manufactured and used Iranian-designed explosively formed penetrators (EFP) in the Gaza Strip since 2007.¹¹ Hamas could use EFPs to constrain the movement of the IDF in the urban environment and threaten Israeli troops. Iran exported EFPs to its proxy and partner militias in Iraq as late as 2004, which these militias then used extensively in their attacks on US servicemembers in Iraq.¹²
- Hamas took around 150-200 individuals hostage during its initial attack into Israeli territory on October 7.¹³ The al Qassem Brigades spokesperson has threatened to execute hostages in response to Israeli attacks, although CTP-ISW has not yet recorded any such executions.¹⁴ CTP-ISW previously reported on how Hamas uses civilians as human shields, intentionally putting them in danger to protect Hamas’ military infrastructure and weapons.¹⁵

West Bank

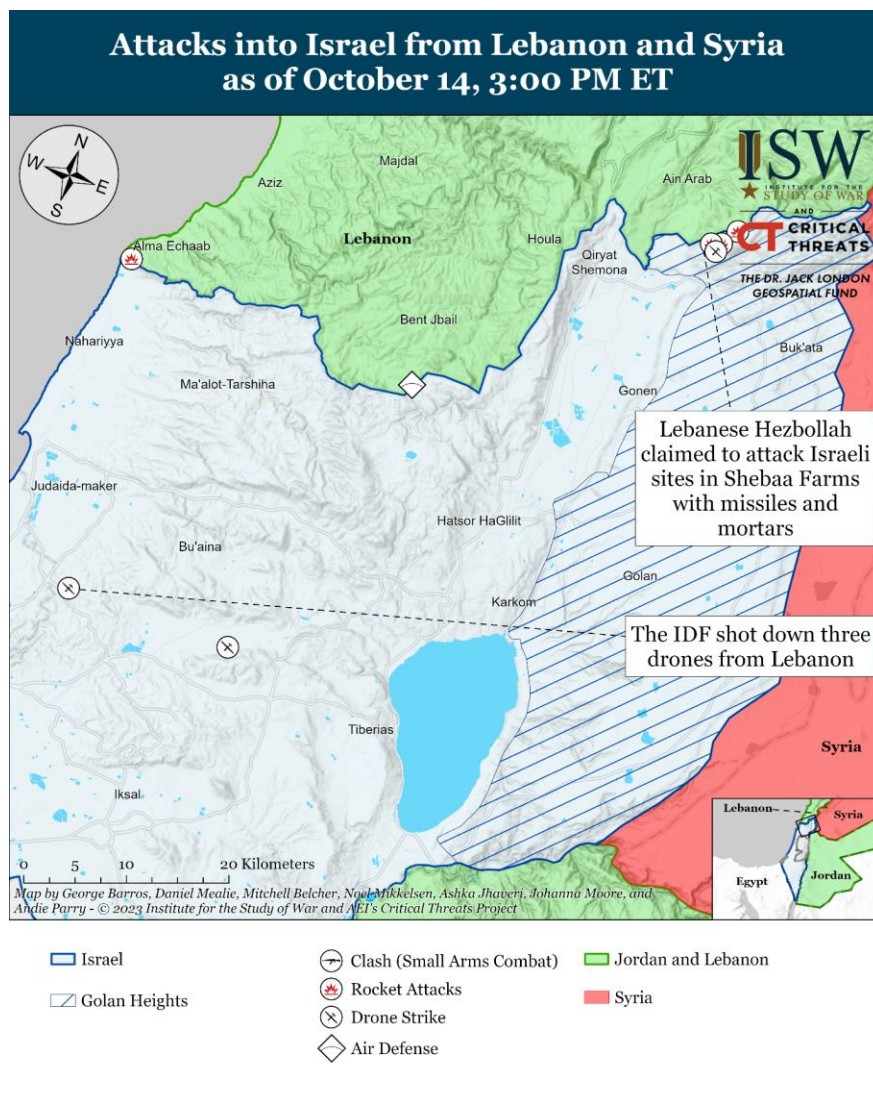


Recorded reports of rocket fire; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Clashes in the West Bank between Israeli forces and Palestinian militias decreased on October 14 after peaking the previous day. CTP-ISW recorded 13 small arms clashes across the West Bank on October 14—significantly less than the 32 clashes recorded on October 13. Israeli forces are conducting arrest campaigns in the West Bank, which may be contributing to the reduced violence.

Hamas remains committed to expanding the war to the West Bank, however. Hamas has repeatedly called for Palestinians to mobilize and escalate against Israeli forces in the West Bank in recent days.¹⁶ Hamas released a statement on October 14 calling for the establishment of “popular protection committees” in all cities and towns of the West Bank to target Israeli settlers.¹⁷ Hamas stated that it is the duty of all Palestinians to actively participate in the war against Israel.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights



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

LH claimed attacks on the IDF for the second consecutive day on October 14 as part of its ongoing harassment of Israeli forces. LH claimed to conduct missile and rocket attacks against five IDF positions in the Shebaa Farms.¹⁸ The IDF furthermore conducted a drone strike on the border targeting a group of militants preparing to fire an anti-tank missile toward Israel.¹⁹ Former IDF Military Intelligence Directorate Chief Tamir Tayman stated that LH is conducting attacks against Israel to reduce IDF pressure on Hamas.²⁰

LH messaging indicates that the group will conduct additional attacks against Israeli forces in the coming days. LH released separate statements on October 14 emphasizing that Israeli attacks against Lebanese security will not go unanswered and that LH has given permission to its members to fight Israel.²¹

Israeli, Lebanese, and UN officials have warned in recent days that the Hamas-Israel war could expand to Lebanon. Hayman stated that LH Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah is putting Lebanon at serious risk by continuing to conduct attacks against Israeli forces.²² Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati has similarly warned that LH may enter the war against Israel.²³ Finally, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres stated that IDF airstrikes along the Israel-Lebanon border risk spreading fighting into Lebanon.²⁴

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Iran and elements of its Axis of Resistance are messaging that the Hamas-Israel war could expand geographically into a multi-front conflict. CTP-ISW is closely monitoring the situation to forecast whether such a scenario is becoming more or less likely.

- Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian warned that the Axis of Resistance has its “hands on the trigger” and will respond to Israel “at an appropriate time” if the United Nations does not stop IDF attacks into the Gaza Strip.²⁵ Abdollahian made these comments during a press conference in Beirut on October 14. Abdollahian similarly called on the United Nations to stop IDF attacks before it is “too late” during a meeting with UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland in Beirut on October 14.²⁶
- Iranian-backed Iraqi militants have broadcast their presence in Lebanon in recent days. Fighters from Asaib Ahl al Haq announced on October 8 that they are joining the war against Israel.²⁷ Abu Azrael—an Iranian-backed Iraqi fighter with a prominent social media presence—later claimed on October 12 that he is near the Israel-Lebanon border and waiting for “any opportunity” to enter Israel.²⁸ A Syrian journalist on October 13 claimed that elements of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces have entered Lebanon via Syria.²⁹
- The IRGC and LH deployed forces to the southwestern Syrian border on October 13, as CTP-ISW previously reported.³⁰ The IRGC transferred elements of its engineering units from Albu Kamal to the Golan Heights. LH similarly redeployed militants from Mayadin to Damascus as part of an effort to transfer LH members throughout Syria to the southwestern border.

Abdollahian traveled to Qatar on October 14, likely to meet with Hamas leadership and discuss Iranian financial assets with Qatari officials.

- Senior Hamas officials, including its Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh, are based in Qatar.³¹ Abdollahian is concluded a diplomatic tour to Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria before traveling to Qatar. CTP-ISW assessed that the tour was part of an Iranian effort to coordinate politically with senior leaders in the Axis of Resistance.³²
- Western media reported on October 12 that the United States and Qatar have agreed to prevent Iran from accessing \$6 billion of financial assets in Qatari banks.³³ South Korea transferred the assets to Qatari banks for Iran to access as part of the prisoner swap agreement that the United States and Iran reached in August 2023.

- ¹ <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28522>
- ² <https://t.me/sarayaps/16315>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16318>
- ³ https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-slow-rate-of-rocket-fire-suggests-hamas-readying-for-long-war
- ⁴ <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28530> ; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/35033 ;
<https://twitter.com/JoeTruzman/status/1713190407482536369> ;
- ⁵ https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/35109 ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1713136419995021812>
- ⁶ <https://www.businessinsider.com/video-israeli-navy-blasted-hamas-fighters-approaching-on-motorboats-2023-10>
- ⁷ <https://t.me/hamasps/16725> ; <https://t.me/hamasps/16727>
- ⁸ <http://almayadeen.net/news/politics/طوفان-الأقصى-تدخل-اسبوعها-الثاني-صواريخ-المقاومة-إلى-عمق-إسر>
- ⁹ <https://nypost.com/2021/05/14/israel-pounds-gaza-in-effort-to-destroy-vast-tunnel-network/>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/gazas-urban-warfare-challenge-lessons-mosul-and-raqqa>
- ¹¹ https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/pdf/PDF1/hamas_080408_5017868...
- ¹²
<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20171123123237/http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk//media/243271/2004-08-19-report-dis-further-evidence-of-lebanese-hizballah-produced-weapons-in-iraq-extract.pdf>
- ¹³ https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-infantry-troops-tanks-entered-gaza-for-localized-raids-to-clear-area-of-terrorists-locate-hostages/
- ¹⁴ https://t.me/spokesman_2020/44
- ¹⁵ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-13-2023>
- ¹⁶ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-13-2023>
- ¹⁷ <https://t.me/hamasps>
- ¹⁸ <http://almayadeen.net/news/politics/المقاومة-الإسلامية-في-لبنان-تستهدف-مواقع-للاحتلال-في-مزارع-ش>
- ¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1713191098879823884>
- ²⁰ <https://twitter.com/HaymanTamir/status/1713117286200983646>
- ²¹ <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/622945> ; https://t.me/Hanata_Republic/2722
- ²² <https://twitter.com/HaymanTamir/status/1713117286200983646>
- ²³ https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/35027
- ²⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/un-chief-reuters-journalists-death-lebanon-shows-danger-israel-hamas-conflict-2023-10-13/>
- ²⁵ <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/22/2971412>
- ²⁶ <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/22/2971603>
- ²⁷ <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/node/7305315>
- ²⁸ https://twitter.com/abu_azrael78/status/1712501925466239380
- ²⁹ https://twitter.com/faytuks/status/1712876584460222681?s=46&t=_XWt9fOAD77gQx8flqZr2A
- ³⁰ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-13-2023>
- ³¹ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/us/who-is-ismail-haniyeh-senior-hamas-leader-who-leads-a-lavish-lifestyle-in-qatar/articleshow/104347525.cms?from=mdr>
- ³² <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-12-2023>
- ³³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-signals-iran-wont-access-its-6-bln-qatar-any-time-soon-2023-10-12/#:~:text=TEL%20AVIV%2FWASHINGTON%2C%20Oct%2012,to%20completely%20freeze%20the%20account.>