

## Iran Update, September 4, 2024

**Annika Ganzeveld, Andie Parry, Kathryn Tyson, Katherine Wells, Ria Reddy, Carolyn Moorman, Kelly Campa, and Nicholas Carl**

**Information Cutoff: 2:00pm ET**

**Senior Iranian military officials have continued to signal that Iran will attack Israel directly in response to Israel killing several senior Axis of Resistance leaders, including Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh, in recent weeks.** Armed Forces General Staff Coordination Deputy Brigadier General Ali Abdollahi Ali Abadi claimed on September 4 that Israel “must bury [its] dream that Iran will not respond” to Haniyeh's death.[1] Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Operations Deputy Brigadier General Mohsen Chizari separately warned that Iran will “definitely” give a “crushing response” to Israel in an interview with Iranian armed forces-run media on September 4.[2] Chizari stated that Iran seeks to “surprise” Israel, which is consistent with CTP-ISW's assessment that Iran is likely trying to generate operational surprise while forgoing strategic surprise ahead of its expected attack.[3] Chizari also discussed Lebanese Hezbollah's recent drone and rocket attack targeting Israel and claimed that Iran's response to Israel will be “different.”[4] It is unclear whether Chizari meant that Iran's retaliation will be different from Hezbollah's recent attack or from Iran's April 2024 drone and missile attack targeting Israel. Chizari is a senior Quds Force official who previously supported efforts to preserve the Bashar al Assad regime during the Syrian civil war.[5] The United States sanctioned Chizari in 2012 for committing human rights abuses against Syrians.[6] Senior Quds Force commanders in particular may desire a direct strike on Israel given that Israel killed Haniyeh at an IRGC Quds Force facility in northern Tehran.[7] The Quds Force's participation in an Iranian strike on Israel could mean that Iran would use more than just drones and missiles—as it did in its April 2024 attack—to attack Israel. CTP-ISW previously assessed that Iran could modify its attack model—possibly by including militia attacks on US positions in Syria—to try to inflict greater damage on Israel than it did in April 2024.[8]

Chizari separately praised Palestinian militias' response to recent Israeli operations in the West Bank, claiming that Israel will not be able to prevent the “formation and strengthening of resistance” in the West Bank.[9] Israeli forces have conducted a large-scale counterterrorism operation in the West Bank since August 27 in order to degrade Palestinian militia networks there.[10] The operation is partly a response to Palestinian militias in the West Bank building the capability and setting conditions to conduct suicide bombing attacks in Israel.

**Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated his plan for a continued Israeli military presence along the Philadelphi Corridor during an English-language press conference on September 4.[11]** This is Netanyahu's second press conference about the corridor

this week amid domestic pressure to reach a ceasefire-hostage agreement following Hamas' execution of six Israeli hostages.[12] Netanyahu used the English-language press conference to explain to an international audience why he demands that Israel retain control of the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip.[13] Netanyahu argued that Israeli disengagement from the Philadelphi Corridor in 2005 enabled Hamas to become a serious threat in the first place by allowing Hamas to smuggle engineering equipment and weapons into the Gaza Strip.[14] Netanyahu warned that international pressure would make it difficult for Israel to return militarily to the corridor if it withdrew as part of the first stage of a ceasefire-hostage agreement.[15] Netanyahu said that he would only consider a full withdrawal in the second stage of ceasefire-hostage negotiations if another entity demonstrated that it can interdict Hamas smuggling through the corridor.[16] Netanyahu's close aide, Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, separately criticized Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi on September 4 for failing to stop Hamas smuggling through the corridor.[17]

**The Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry Eurasia Department Director General Mojtaba Demirchi Lou met with the Russian Ambassador to Tehran Alexey Dedov on September 2.[18] The meeting followed Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov's statement in support of Azerbaijan and Turkey's Zangezur corridor project.[19]** Demirchi Lou underlined the need to respect internationally recognized borders, regional stability, and mutual interests of the Caucasus states, especially ahead of the upcoming 3+3 meeting with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Turkey, and Russia, as well as a meeting between the Iranian, Russian, and Azerbaijani foreign ministers.[20] Lavrov expressed support for the Zangezur corridor in an interview with Russian media during Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent visit to Baku, Azerbaijan, on August 19.[21] The Iranian regime has historically opposed Azerbaijani and Turkish efforts to establish the Zangezur corridor between Azerbaijan proper and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic because such a corridor would sever Iranian land access to Russia and Europe via Armenia.[22]

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Iran:** Senior Iranian military officials have continued messaging that they will retaliate for Israel killing Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran.
- **Gaza Strip:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated his plans for a continued Israeli military presence along the Philadelphi Corridor between Egypt and the Gaza Strip.
- **Caucasus:** Iranian and Russian officials met to discuss the Caucasus amid growing differences between Moscow and Tehran.

# Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War

As of September 4, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET

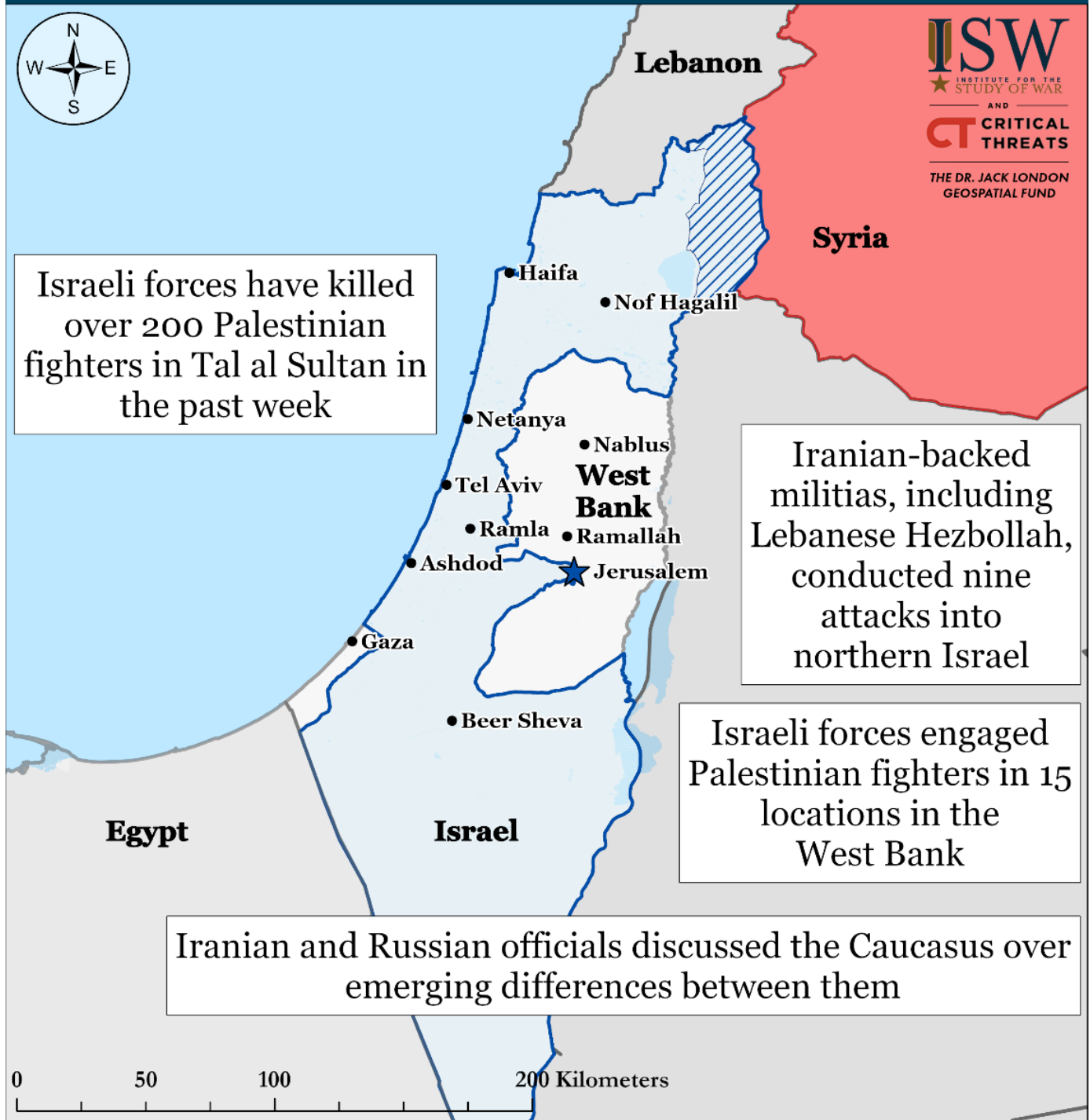


Israeli forces have killed over 200 Palestinian fighters in Tal al Sultan in the past week

Iranian-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted nine attacks into northern Israel

Israeli forces engaged Palestinian fighters in 15 locations in the West Bank

Iranian and Russian officials discussed the Caucasus over emerging differences between them



Gaza Strip and West Bank Golan Heights

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

## **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 World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that the three-day polio vaccine campaign in the central Gaza Strip concluded on September 3.[23]** Israel and Palestinian militias observed a limited humanitarian pause in fighting in select areas of the central Gaza Strip during the vaccine drive.[24] The WHO said that the vaccine reached over 187,000 children under the age of ten over three days.[25] Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT)—a department within the Israeli Defense Ministry—said that the polio vaccination campaign and humanitarian pause would shift to the southern Gaza Strip on September 5.[26] The Israeli Prime Minister’s Office has emphasized that the pause in fighting is not related to the longer-term ceasefire-hostage proposal currently under discussion in Doha.[27]

**Palestinian militias conducted a rocket attack targeting an IDF site around the Netzarim Corridor, south of Gaza City, on September 4.[28]**

**The IDF published a summary of the 401st Brigade’s operations in Tal al Sultan, western Rafah, on September 4.[29]** The 401st Brigade has killed over 200 Palestinian fighters and located dozens of weapons in civilian homes over the past week.[30] The IDF seized ten long-range rockets and explosively formed penetrators during the operation. Palestinian militias have only claimed one close-range engagement with Israeli forces in Rafah since August 24.[31] Palestinian militias have continued firing mortars and rockets at IDF positions in Rafah, however.[32]

# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

## As of September 4, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



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Palestinian militias fired rockets targeting Israeli forces around the Netzarim Corridor

Israeli forces and Palestinian militias concluded a three-day limited pause in fighting in the central Gaza Strip to facilitate polio vaccinations

The IDF 401st Brigade has killed over 200 Palestinian fighters in Tal al Sultan in the past week



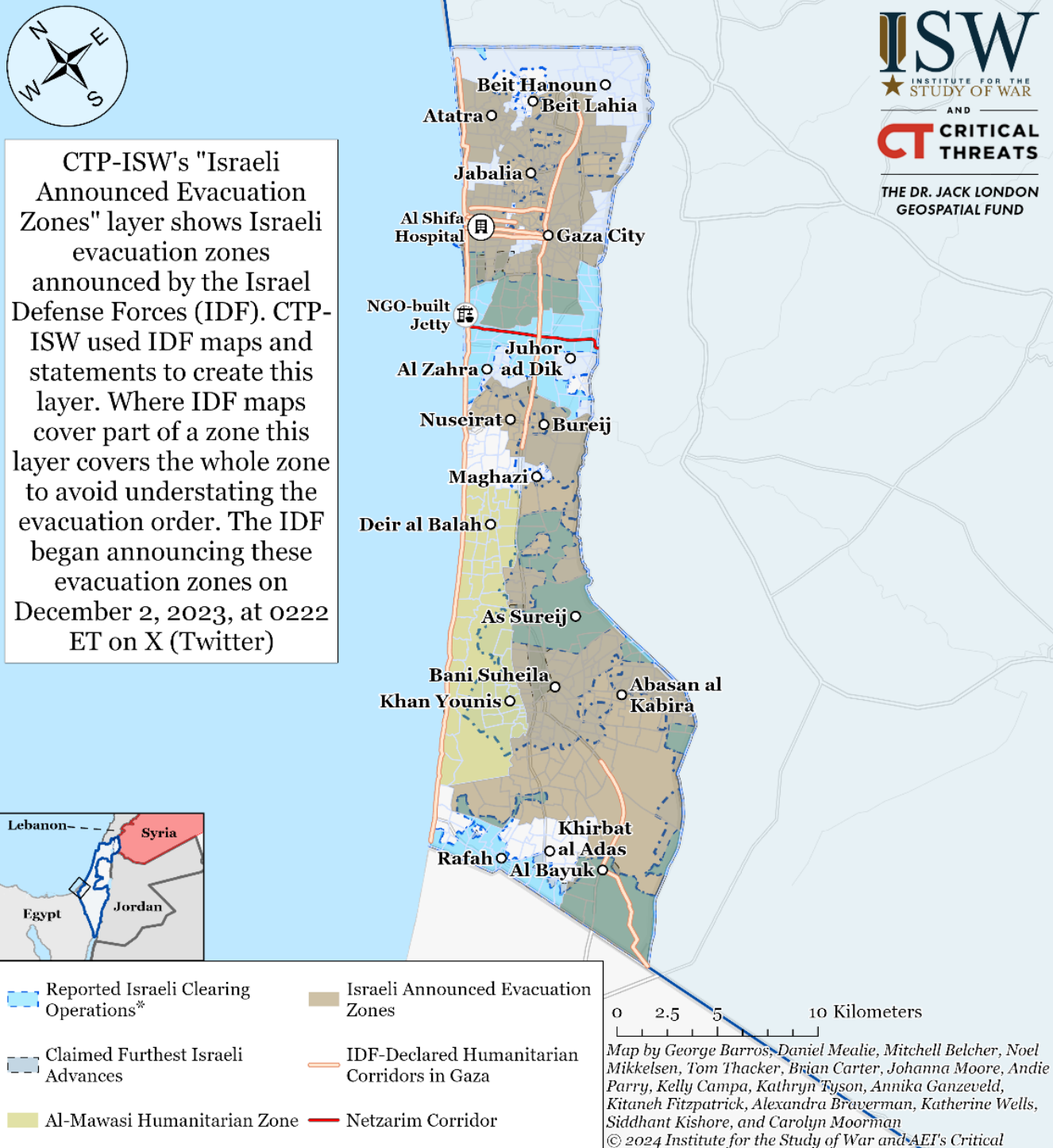
Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Tom Thacker, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, and Carolyn Moorman - © 2024 Institute for the Study 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			

\* 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 September 4, 2024 at 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

## West Bank

### Axis of Resistance objectives:

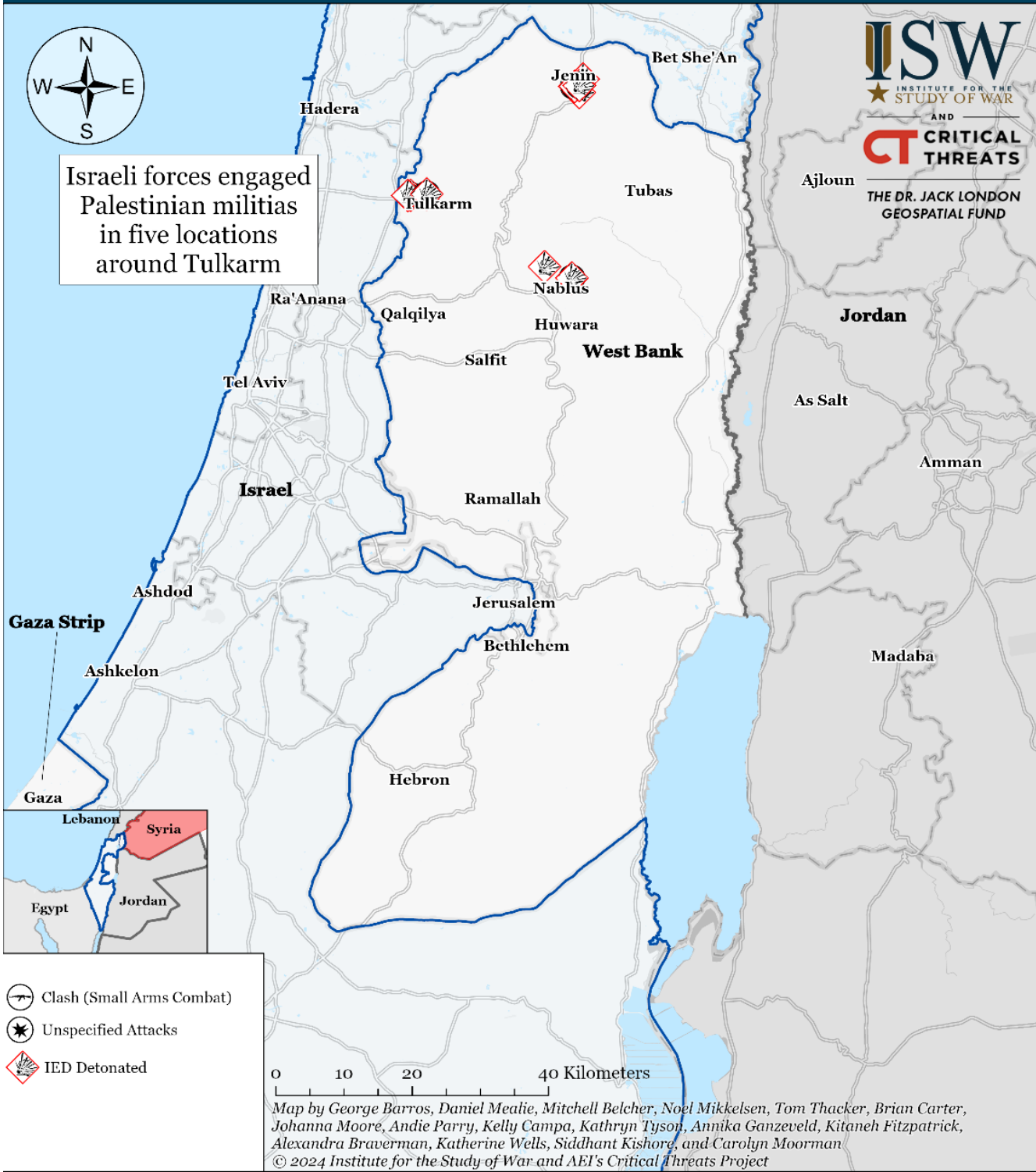
- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

**Israeli forces have engaged Palestinian fighters in 15 locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on September 3.[33]** The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Mujahidin Brigades fired small arms and detonated improvised explosive devices (IED) targeting Israeli forces in Jenin, Nablus, and Tulkarm.

**Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said on September 4 that Israel must eventually destroy Palestinian militias in the West Bank.[34]** Gallant said that current Israeli operations there are simply “mowing the grass.” Gallant singled out Jenin, Tubas, and Tulkarm as hubs of Palestinian militia activity. The statement come after the IDF launched a week-long counterterrorism operation across the West Bank in order to degrade Palestinian militia networks in the West Bank.[35]

# Significant Activity in the West Bank

As of September 4, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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



## **Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights**

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

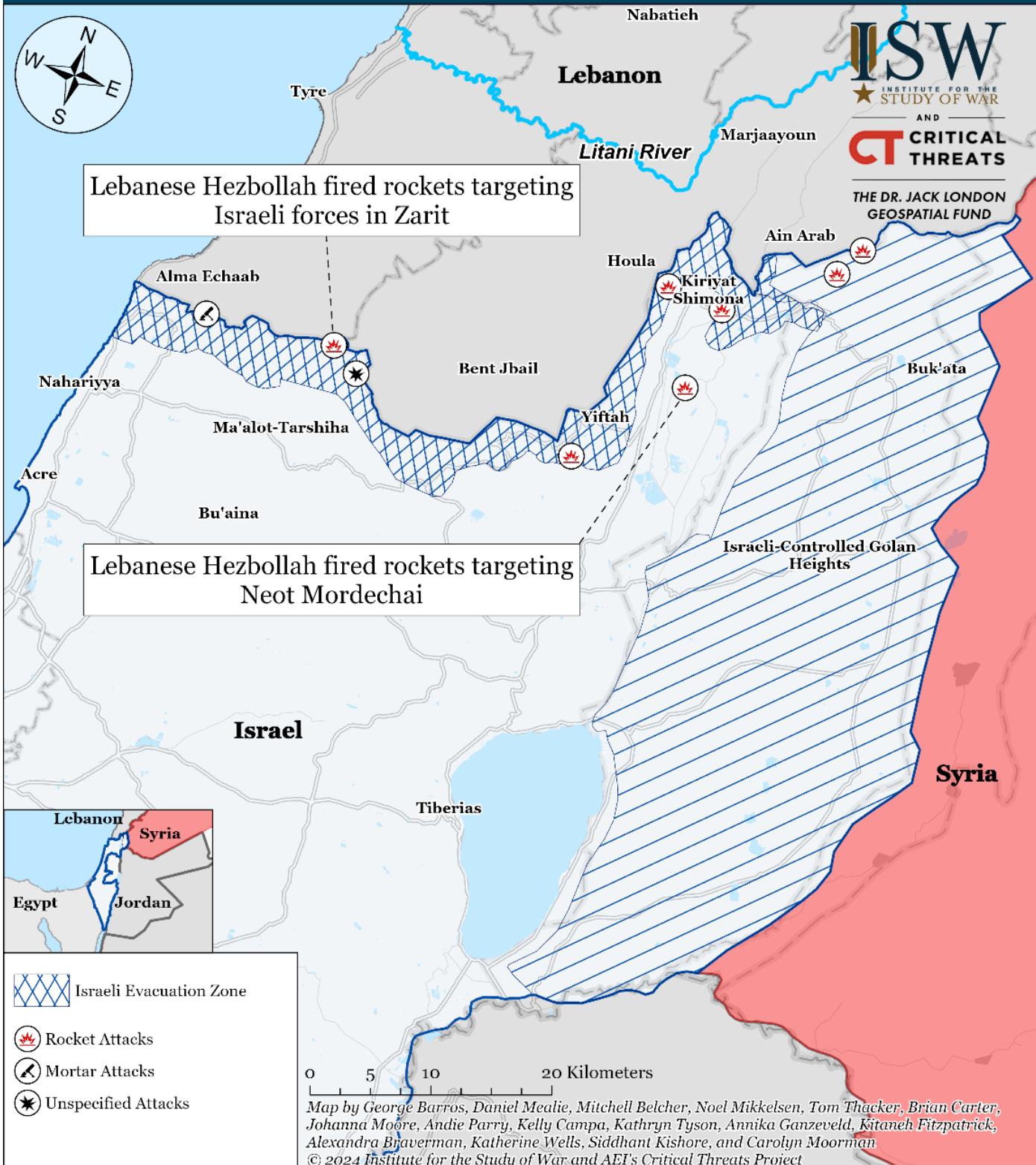
- Deter Israel from conducting a ground operation into Lebanon
- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

**Iranian-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, have conducted at least nine attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on September 3.[36]** Hezbollah said that it targeted the Neot Mordechai settlement for the first time on September 4.[37]

**Several Israeli commanders held a training exercise on September 3 to increase readiness for a potential conflict in northern Israel.[38]** Northern Command Commander Major General Uri Gordin and Northern Guard Commander Major General Saar Zur participated in the exercises.[39]

# Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

As of September 4, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



## Iran and Axis of Resistance

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed a drone attack targeting Haifa Port on September 3.[40] The IDF intercepted the drone before it entered Israeli territory.[41]

### Iranian-sponsored Attacks in the Middle East As of September 4, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



**US Central Command (CENTCOM) has destroyed a Houthi missile in Houthi-controlled Yemen since CTP-ISW's data cut off on September 3.**[42] CENTCOM determined that the system posed a threat to US and coalition forces and merchant vessels in the area.[43]

**Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian conducted his first provincial visit as president to Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province, on September 3 and 4 for a religious holiday celebrating Imam Reza.**[44] The trip followed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's 13-point guidance to Pezeshkian's government, in which Khamenei emphasized the significance of touring provinces and engaging with the Iranian public to inform the administration's decision-making.[45] Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi, Science, Research and Technology Minister Hossein Simai Saraf, Atomic Energy Organization Director Mohammad Eslami, Economic Affairs and Finance Minister Abdol Nasser Hemmati, and Vice President for Strategy Mohammad Javad Zarif accompanied Pezeshkian.[46] Pezeshkian reiterated his views on "merit selection" in administrative appointments and public satisfaction with the government during a meeting with Astan Quds Razavi Custodian Ahmad Maravi.[47] Maravi described Pezeshkian as pious and emphasized Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's trust in Pezeshkian. Araghchi discussed the importance of foreign affairs in maintaining the Islamic Revolution with Mashhad Friday Prayer Leader Ahmad Alam ol Hoda.[48]

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