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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 2, 2023

Iran Update, October 2, 2023

Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Nicholas Carl

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 weekly on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. For more on developments in Iran and the region, see our [interactive map of Iran and the Middle East](#).

Key Takeaways

1. Kuwaiti newspaper *Al Jarida* reported on October 2 that Iran and Russia have agreed to transfer unspecified weapons from Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) to Russian forces in Ukraine and to tribal insurgents fighting the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in eastern Syria.
2. Iraqi protesters gathered in at least three cities on October 1 to express frustrations over poor domestic conditions and the Iraqi political establishment. CTP recorded protests in Baghdad, Amarah, and Nasiriyah.

Iranian Activities in the Levant

This section covers Iranian efforts to consolidate and expand Tehran's economic, military, and political influence throughout the Levant, especially in Syria. This section examines some of the many campaigns that Iran is pursuing to achieve this strategic objective. CTP will update and refine our assessments of these campaigns over time and in future updates.

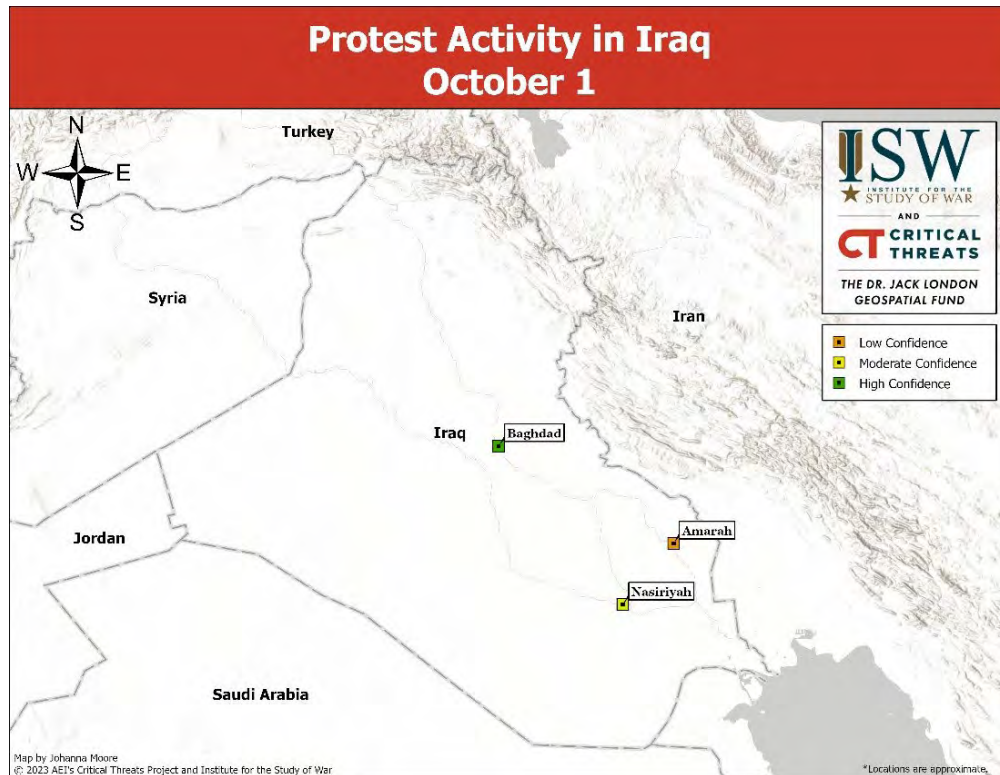
Kuwaiti newspaper *Al Jarida* reported on October 2 that Iran and Russia have agreed to transfer unspecified weapons from Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) to Russian forces in Ukraine and to tribal insurgents fighting the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in eastern Syria.[1] *Al Jarida* cited an unidentified official in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force. The official accompanied IRGC Quds Force Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani on visits to Lebanon and Syria in September 2023, according to the report. ISW cannot corroborate or verify these claims. The *Al Jarida* report is consistent with ISW's previous reporting on Iran and Russia. ISW has previously reported that:

- Iran, Russia, and the Syrian regime are trying to prolong conflict in eastern Syria since fighting erupted between the SDF and Arab tribes in late August 2023.[2] Pro-regime forces have sent weapons into SDF-controlled territory and formed a tribal militia.[3] Pro-regime forces have also allowed tribal forces to use regime-controlled territory as a rear area. The ongoing clashes are fracturing the SDF and thereby support the coordinated campaign that Iran, Russia, and the Syrian regime are conducting to expel the United States from Syria.[4]
- Some Russian forces lack adequate artillery support in Ukraine and suffer from a shortage of artillery shells.[5] Russia's defense industrial base has accelerated the production of shells and skipped quality assurance measures to do so.[6] LH maintains a vast and diverse stockpile of unguided artillery rockets, which it could provide to Russian forces[7] The Russian Ministry of Defense released footage of Iranian-made 122-mm Grad rockets in September 2023.[8] The *Al Jarida* report also claimed that LH would provide weapons to Russia for its war in Ukraine in exchange for Russian forces transporting unspecified Iranian weapons through Syria to LH in Lebanon. ISW cannot corroborate or verify this claim as well. Israel frequently conducts airstrikes on Iranian weapons shipments into and through Syria as well as on advanced weapons research and development facilities.[9] Russia may be able to facilitate weapons shipments without risking Israeli airstrikes interdicting

them. Russia and Israel have a complex relationship in Syria, as Israel has historically relied on Russia to curb Iranian activities in Syria.[10]

Iranian Activities in Iraq

This section covers Iranian efforts to consolidate and expand Tehran's economic, military, and political influence throughout Iraq. This section examines some of the many campaigns that Iran is pursuing to achieve this strategic objective. CTP will update and refine our assessments of these campaigns over time and in future updates.



Iraqi protesters gathered in at least three cities on October 1 to express frustrations over poor domestic conditions and the Iraqi political establishment.[11] CTP recorded protests in Baghdad, Amarah, and Nasiriyah. Protesters in Baghdad voiced grievances, including worsening living conditions, government corruption, and recent election reforms that marginalize pro-protester candidates. Protesters in Amarah chanted against Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani and Qais Khazali, who leads Iranian-backed militia Asaib Ahl al Haq.[12] Wael al Rikabi—a member of the State of Law party led by former Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki—responded to the protests by rejecting the possibility of political reforms.[13]

The Iraqi protesters were commemorating the three-year anniversary of the Tishreen Movement anniversary, which was a large-scale protest movement in Iraq in 2019. The Tishreen Movement erupted in response to high unemployment, poor government service provision, and rampant corruption within the government.[14] Protesters at the time demanded election reforms that would increase popular representation in government and push back on large political parties that had consolidated power.[15] Then-Prime Minister Mostafa al Kadhimi made such reforms in 2020, which involved eliminating the list-based voting system in Iraq.[16] The Sudani administration later reversed these reforms in March 2023, as CTP previously reported, reinstituting the list system and again enabling large political parties to consolidate power.[17]

The protests on October 1 coincide with accusations that some actors in the Iraqi political establishment are preparing to interfere in the upcoming provincial elections in December 2023. The Democratic Change Forces coalition released a statement on September 20 asserting that "two influential parties" have coopted Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) to interfere.[18] The coalition called on the United Nations to send election observers to Iraq. The coalition was responding to Judge Haydar al Hanoun—the head of Iraq's Federal Integrity Commission—announcing on September 14 that his commission will audit

candidates in the upcoming provincial elections for financial corruption. [19] The audit will extend to the candidates' families and affiliates. The election reform amendments in March 2023 prohibit individuals charged with corruption from running for office.[20] Haydar al Hanoun is affiliated with the Iranian-backed Badr Organization. CTP assessed in March that the Federal Integrity Commission could use these amendments to marginalize political opposition by charging them with corruption.[21]

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- [2] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-september-29-2023>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syrian-democratic-forces%E...>
- [3] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-september-29-2023>
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- [21] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-march-20-2023>

IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 4, 2023

Iran Update, October 4, 2023

Amin Soltani, Annika Ganzeveld, Ashka Jhaveri, Andie Parry, and Nicholas Carl

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 weekly on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. For more on developments and in Iran and the region, see our [interactive map of Iran and the Middle East](#).

Key Takeaways

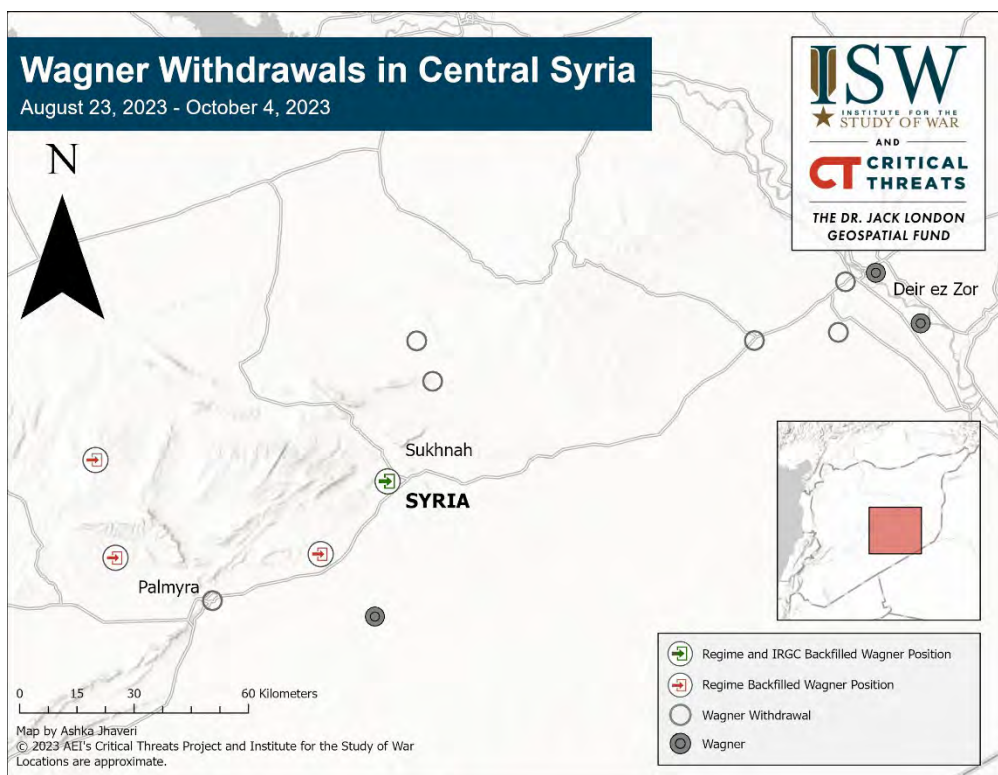
1. IRGC personnel backfilled a formerly Wagner-held position in Sukhna in central Syria on September 28, supporting Iranian efforts to establish a permanent presence in Syria.
2. Lebanese Hezbollah-controlled outlet *Al Manar* published a video mapping US military positions in Syria.
3. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev implicitly threatened on September 25 to forcefully take control of some of Armenia's southern territory, which would violate Iran's stated red line of preserving Armenia's territorial integrity.

Iranian Activities in the Levant

This section covers Iranian efforts to consolidate and expand Tehran's economic, military, and political influence throughout the Levant, especially in Syria. This section examines some of the many campaigns that Iran is pursuing to achieve this strategic objective. CTP will update and refine our assessments of these campaigns over time and in future updates.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) personnel backfilled a formerly Wagner-held position in Sukhna in central Syria on September 28, supporting Iranian efforts to establish a permanent presence in Syria. Wagner forces withdrew from Sukhna, among other positions in the central Syrian desert, in September 2023 as part of Wagner's departure from Syria.^[1] The Russian Defense Ministry had previously instructed Wagner forces to leave Syria or join the Russian armed forces by September 20.^[2] Iran commonly uses the route running through Sukhna to move forces and weapons throughout Syria, which the backfilling may further facilitate.

ISW previously assessed that Iran could assume control of other formerly Wagner-held positions in the central Syrian desert to reap economic benefits.^[3] Some of those positions have gas and oil fields that Wagner had guarded. Russia is helping the Syrian regime backfill some of those locations. There remain, however, several formerly Wagner-held positions with gas and oil fields to which neither the Syrian regime nor Iran have backfilled at this time. Syria has some of the largest known reserves of phosphate, which is a key fertilizer ingredient, as well as several oil and gas fields.^[4]



Lebanese Hezbollah-controlled outlet *Al Manar* published on October 4 a video mapping US military positions in Syria. The video purported to show where and how US forces operate as well as details on each position.^[5] The video grossly exaggerated the US force presence and areas of operation in Syria.^[6] The video also depicted the locations of major oil fields in Syria, which is consistent with the Axis of Resistance's attempts to portray the United States as an occupier looking to exploit Syria's natural resources.^[7] The video risks enflaming grassroots frustration among Syrian militants toward the United States and possibly motivating attacks on US positions.

Iranian Domestic and Political Affairs

This section covers factors and trends affecting regime decision-making and stability. CTP will cover domestic politics, significant protest activity, and related issues here.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev implicitly threatened on September 25 to forcefully take control of some of Armenia's southern territory, which would violate Iran's stated red line of preserving Armenia's territorial integrity. Aliyev made the threat during a visit to Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan exclave. Aliyev during the visit met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and used additional irredentist rhetoric, describing Armenia's southern Syunik province as rightfully belonging to Azerbaijan.^[8] Controlling Syunik province would fulfill Aliyev's desire to connect Nakhchivan to Azerbaijan proper directly. Tigran Balayan—the Armenian envoy to the EU—warned on October 2 that an Azerbaijani attack into Armenia “is imminent.”^[9] Iranian leaders have repeatedly expressed opposition to Azerbaijani expansion into Armenia, arguing that doing so would block Iranian land access to Russia and Europe.^[10] Tehran has also expressed concern that such expansion could facilitate the spread of Turkish influence in the Caucasus.^[11] Aliyev's threat came shortly after he ordered a two-day military offensive into the Nagorno-Karabakh region on September 19-20.^[12] Nagorno-Karabakh is an enclave in Azerbaijan that is internationally recognized as Azerbaijani territory but until the offensive was effectively controlled by the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.^[13] Armenia has historically supported the enclave with financial and military assistance. Azerbaijani forces nevertheless seized the region rapidly during the offensive. The Nagorno-Karabakh Republic has since then announced plans to dissolve by January 2023, ceding full control to the Azerbaijani government.^[14]

Armenia has begun seeking external security assistance from parties other than Russia—its traditional security partner—in recent months to defend against Azerbaijan. Armenian and Iranian officials have separately indicated dissatisfaction with Russia, asserting that Moscow has neglected protecting Armenia

since the invasion of Ukraine.[15] Armenia hosted a joint military exercise with the United States between September 11-20.[16] French officials separately announced on October 4 that Armenia and France are discussing arms agreements.”[17] Armenian National Security Council Secretary Armen Grigoryan lastly met with senior Iranian political and military officials in Tehran between October 2-4.[18] Iran could pursue various courses of action to defend Armenia and thereby protect its strategic interests in the Caucasus:

1. Iran could continue its current approach of using diplomacy and military threats to prevent Azerbaijan from attacking Armenia. Iranian officials have held nine separate meetings with Armenian and Azerbaijani officials since the Azerbaijani offensive in September 2023. The Iranian officials called for dialogue, specifically through the 3+3 format.[19] The 3+3 format involves Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Russia, and Turkey working together to address problems in the Caucasus. Iran has also conducted a series of military exercises along its border with Azerbaijan over the past year to pressure Baku to avoid escalation.[20]
2. Iran could provide military support to Armenia. This course of action is plausible because Israeli media previously claimed that Iran has supplied drones and other unspecified military equipment to Armenia in recent months.[21] CTP cannot corroborate or verify this claim, however.
3. Iran could send military forces to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. This course of action is plausible because Iranian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri offered to deploy Iranian “observers” to the border during his meeting with Grigoryan in Tehran on October 4.[22] These observers would presumably be Iranian military personnel, given Bagheri’s position. Iran deploying forces to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border would be meant to deter Azerbaijan from attacking but would also signal Iranian readiness to militarily escalate with Azerbaijan to at least some level. It remains unclear whether Iranian leaders would risk a large-scale conflict with Azerbaijan to protect Armenia, however.
4. Iran could take no serious measures to prevent conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This course of action could involve various kinds of support, such as economic and humanitarian assistance, to Armenia. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian emphasized readiness to send aid to Armenia for refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh during his meeting with Grigoryan in Tehran on October 4.[23]

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- [10] <https://defapress.dot.ir/fa/news/617459> ;
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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 6, 2023

Iran Update, October 6, 2023

Johanna Moore, Ashka Jhaveri, and Nicholas Carl

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 weekly on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. For more on developments and in Iran and the region, see our [interactive map of Iran and the Middle East](#).

Key Takeaways

1. Turkey has conducted a series of airstrikes in northern Syria against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—the United States' sole security partner in the country—since October 5. These attacks are placing significant pressure on the SDF, which, in turn, puts at risk the US mission to defeat ISIS.
2. Iran has demanded that the Iraqi central government extradite members of Iranian Kurdish opposition groups to Iran, according to independent Iraqi outlet Al Mada. Such a demand would appear to violate international law.

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Turkey has conducted a series of airstrikes in northern Syria against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—the United States' sole security partner in the country—since October 5.[1] These attacks are placing significant pressure on the SDF, which, in turn, puts at risk the US mission to defeat ISIS. The US relies heavily on the SDF to conduct and facilitate counter-ISIS operations in Syria.[2] The SDF is already under significant strain in eastern Syria, where a tribal insurgency erupted in August 2023 and has motivated the SDF to commit resources toward fighting.[3] The Turkish airstrikes could create space for the tribal insurgency to expand and for ISIS to consolidate its position in SDF-held territory, given that the SDF faces bandwidth constraints. CTP continues to assess that ISIS aims to reimpose its control over territory in Syria and has the capability to do so, should the opportunity arise.[4]

- Turkey has conducted dozens of airstrikes into northern Syria since October 5 in response to a terror attack in Ankara.[5] The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)—a US-, EU-, and Turkish-designated terrorist organization—claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing attack in Ankara on October 1.[6] Turkey said the perpetrators of the attack came from Syria and that all SDF energy sites and infrastructure in Iraq and Syria are legitimate retaliation targets.[7] A Turkish Defense Ministry official added on October 5 that conducting a ground incursion into Syria is among Turkey's response options.[8]
- Tribal insurgent attacks against the SDF in eastern Syria quintupled in the first week of October 2023 compared to previous weeks.[9] The SDF has deployed units from other provinces as well as its premier counterterrorism forces to fight the insurgents.[10] The Turkish airstrikes could further constrain the SDF's manpower and resources, as the SDF faces simultaneous challenges in northern Syria and Deir ez Zor province. The SDF previously halted counter-ISIS operations during a series of Turkish airstrikes in November 2022, highlighting these bandwidth constraints.[11]

- ISIS aims to drive wedges among local forces and social groups in Iraq and Syria to increase recruitment among these groups and control over them. ISIS can exploit the strain on SDF bandwidth to increase its operations without SDF pressure and present itself as a viable alternative to the SDF and Arab tribes in Deir ez Zor province. ISIS seeks to do so as part of its effort to subvert both parties and recruit hardliners from the Arab tribes with promises of greater autonomy.

Turkey is using diplomatic and military pressure to divide the United States from the SDF. Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Hakan Fidan stated during a phone call with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken that the United States “should stop working with” the SDF.^[12] Turkey has additionally conducted multiple uncoordinated airstrikes and military flights near US positions in northern Syria since the Turkish airstrikes began on October 5.^[13] US forces shot down a Turkish drone that came within half a kilometer of US troops.^[14]

The mounting pressure on the SDF supports the Iranian objective of pressuring the United States to withdraw forces from Syria. Iran has coordinated with Russia and the Syrian regime in recent months to create an increasingly hostile operating environment for US forces in Syria.^[15] Iran and the Syrian regime as part of that effort have cooperated to support and prolong the tribal insurgency against the SDF.^[16] The mounting pressures on the SDF create opportunities for Iran and the Syrian regime to further stoke the conflict between the SDF and tribal insurgents with the intent of undermining the stability of the SDF and ultimately forcing the United States to leave Syria.

Iranian Activities in Iraq

This section covers Iranian efforts to consolidate and expand Tehran’s economic, military, and political influence throughout Iraq. This section examines some of the many campaigns that Iran is pursuing to achieve this strategic objective. CTP will update and refine our assessments of these campaigns over time and in future updates.

Iran has demanded that the Iraqi central government extradite members of Iranian Kurdish opposition groups to Iran, according to independent Iraqi outlet Al Mada. Such a demand would appear to violate international law. Iran and Iraq signed in March 2023 a security agreement requiring Iraqi authorities to disarm and relocate members of the Iranian Kurdish opposition groups, which were operating in Iraqi Kurdistan at the time.^[17] Iranian leaders accused these groups of stoking civil unrest against the Iranian regime and described their presence in Iraqi Kurdistan as a national security threat.^[18] Iraqi officials announced on September 19 that they designated group members as refugees and moved them to camps in unspecified locations in central Iraq.^[19] UN officials welcomed the move and offered support to group members given refugee status.^[20] Iranian officials have stated that “some parts” of the security agreement remain unfulfilled referring to, in part, demands to extradite some of these now refugees to Iran.^[21] States cannot send refugees to territories where their “life or freedom would be threatened on account of [their] race, religion, nationality, or membership of a particular social group or political opinion,” according to the 1967 Protocol of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.^[22] The UN High Commissioner for Refugees defined a “refugee” as an individual who has “a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political, is outside the country of [their] nationality, and... unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”^[23] Iraqi government extradition of Kurdish Iranian opposition groups would also appear to violate the international legal principle of non-refoulment. Non-refoulment guarantees that migrants irrespective of migrant status should not be returned to a country of origin where they would come under “torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and other irreparable harm.”^[24] Iran and Iraq appear to be nearing an impasse toward completely fulfilling their security agreement, which could prompt renewed Iranian attacks into Iraqi Kurdistan. Iran and Iraq reached the security agreement after Iran conducted repeated strikes against the opposition groups in Iraqi Kurdistan from September to November 2022.^[25] Iranian leaders have threatened in recent months to resume such attacks if Iraqi authorities do not completely fulfill the security agreement. It is unclear at this time whether such threats are a pressure tactic to get Iraqi authorities to extradite the opposition members or whether the threats are a precursor to future Iranian attacks into Iraqi Kurdistan.^[26]

The most dangerous course of action for the United States is one in which Iran conducts a large-scale strike campaign into Iraqi Kurdistan, while the Kurdish-led SDF faces mounting pressure in Syria. CTP does not assess that this course of action is likely at this time but is identifying it given

the risks it could pose. The United States relies heavily on Kurdish actors in Iraq and Syria to enable the US military footprint there. That on-the-ground presence is essential to combat ISIS. Intensifying pressure on the Kurdish actors in Iraq and Syria would present the United States with an increasingly hostile operating environment that could impede counter-ISIS operations.

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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 8, 2023

Special Edition Iran Update, October 8, 2023

Johanna Moore and Ashka Jhaveri

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 weekly on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. For more on developments in Iran and the region, see our [interactive map of Iran and the Middle East](#).

Palestinian militias in Gaza responded to calls from Hamas to join in fighting against Israeli security forces on October 8. Hamas and its militant wing, Al Qassem Brigade, called on fellow Palestinian militias and members of the Axis of Resistance to join in its fight against Israel on October 7 following its ground incursion into Israel from Gaza.^[1] Palestinian militias quickly pledged their support in fighting against Israeli security forces and clashed with Israeli security forces at border points and within Israeli territory.^[2] Most clashes between Palestinian militias and Israeli security forces have been concentrated in southern Israel with Hamas reporting that it rotated new forces into Israeli territory to continue the fight against Israeli security forces on October 8.^[3]

- The Al Qassem Brigade clashed with Israeli security forces in Sufa Kibbutz, Holeit Kibbutz, Ofakim, Sderot, Yad Mordechai, Kfar Azza, Kissufim, Be'eri military post, and Ezre in southern Israel on October 7 and 8.^[4] The brigade also conducted two separate rocket attacks on Sderot and Ashkelon of 100 rockets each, according to the group's Telegram channel.^[5] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) also fought against Israeli security forces with the Al Qassem Brigade in several towns in southern Israel.^[6]
- PIJ backfilled Hamas's Al Qassem Brigade in Israel's South District on October 8, which allowed the Al Qassem Brigade fighters to rest and refit. Hamas Spokesperson Abu Ubaida reported that Hamas rotated new forces into Israeli territory to continue the fight against Israeli security forces in a statement on October 8.^[7] The Al Qassem Brigade appears to be the most active Palestinian militia operating in the vicinity of Gaza.
- Non-Iranian affiliated Palestinian militias also supported the offensive. The Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade conducted rocket strikes into Israeli territory on October 8.^[8] The brigade previously coordinated attacks with Hamas and PIJ in 2008.^[9] The Popular Resistance Committee's military wing claimed it used one-way attack drones to attack Israeli targets.^[10] ISW cannot independently verify either group's claim.

Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) and Palestinian militias also conducted attacks on Israeli positions from south Lebanon and the West Bank, respectively, which could expand the war to a second front. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh claimed on October 7 that the Al Aqsa Flood Operation began in Gaza and will extend to the West Bank.^[11] That the Axis of Resistance coordinated the operation with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and through a Palestinian joint operations room suggests that LH and the Palestinian militants planned to open a second front.^[12] Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant warned on April 20 that a multi-front war with Iran and its proxies was more likely than limited conflict and emphasized the threat of a simultaneous attack.^[13]

- The Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade reported that its fighters clashed with Israeli security forces on October 7 in Bat Hefer, Hefer Valley Regional Council, Central District.^[14] Bat Hefer is located within Israeli territory, bordering the West Bank.
- Unspecified Palestinian fighters clashed with Israeli security forces on October 7 at the Salem checkpoint, Darwish Salem, Haifa District. Salem checkpoint is one of the checkpoints leading from

- LH conducted an artillery and guided missile strike into Shebaa Farms on October 8. Shebaa Farms is recognized as disputed territory between Israel, Lebanon, and Syria.[17] LH stated that it was not a neutral party in the current conflict and claimed that its strike on Shebaa Farms was on its path to “liberate what remains of occupied Lebanese land.”[18] The strikes hit a radar site and two unspecified positions in Zabdin and Ruwaisat at Shebaa Farms.[19]

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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 9, 2023

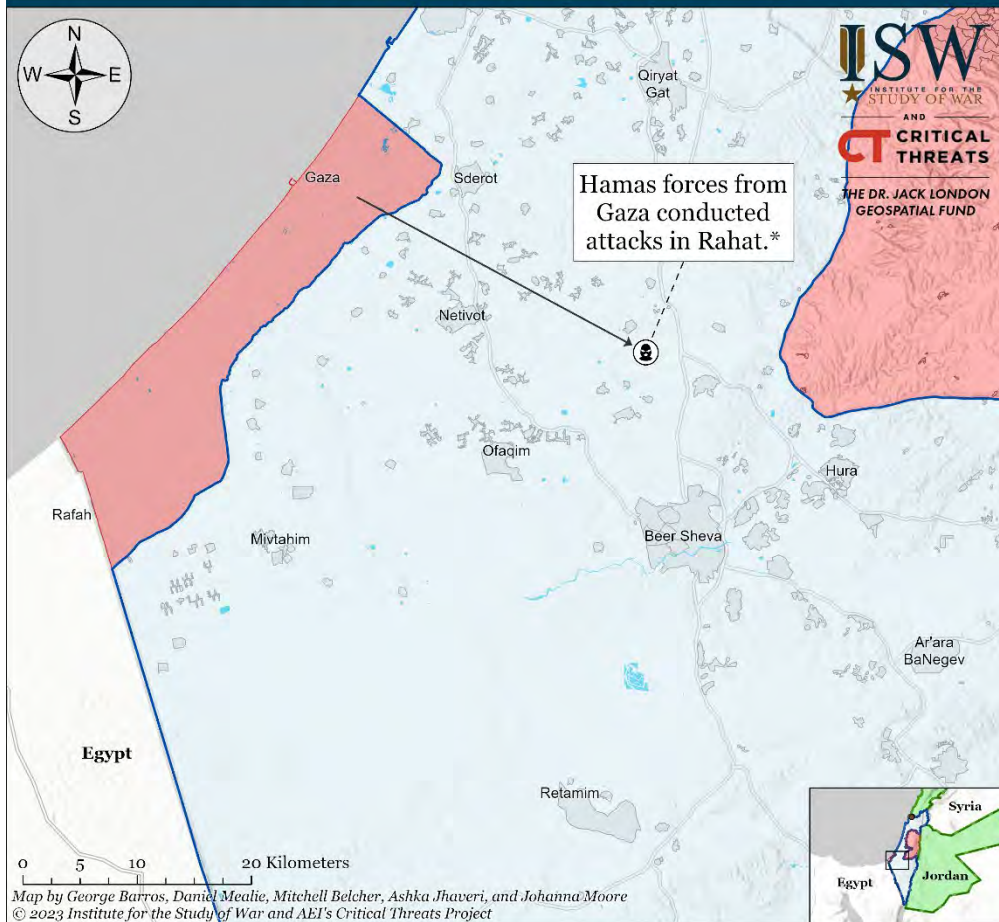
Iran Update, October 9, 2023

Ashka Jhaveri, Annika Ganzeveld, Johanna Moore

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 weekly on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. For more on developments in Iran and the region, see our [interactive map of Iran and the Middle East](#).

Hamas is expanding its incursions into southern Israel as Palestinian militias in the West Bank and Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) clash with Israeli security forces in the northern province of the country. The situation could expand the war to a second front. Hamas launched a surprise ground and air attack into Israel on October 7 which included sending hundreds of fighters into Israel to attack nearby border posts, military sites, and residential areas. Israel is conducting airstrikes in Gaza to retaliate. Iran's Axis of Resistance is aligning itself with Hamas' operation, however.

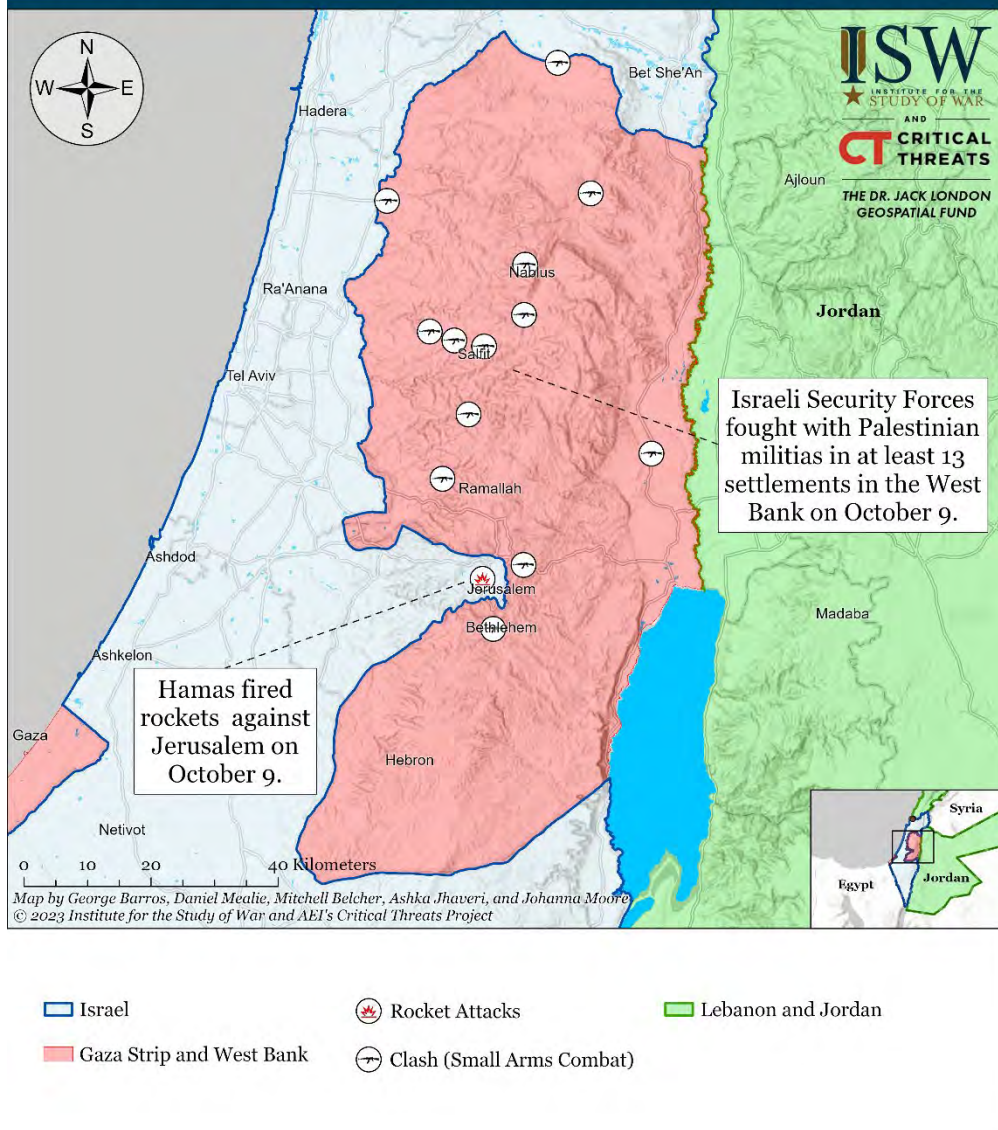
- Hamas' militant wing the Al Qassam Brigade launched an attack into the Israeli town of Rahat, which is approximately 30 kilometers east of Gaza on October 9. The Al Qassam Brigade also fired rockets into Israeli territory on October 9, including into Jerusalem as Hamas called on people in the city to attack Israelis and be at the forefront of resistance.^[1]
- Palestinian militias conducted attacks against Israelis in the West Bank on October 9 in response to calls from The Lions' Den (TLD), a West Bank militia that *Israel Hayom* claims is receiving funding from Hamas.^[2] These attacks are consistent with Hamas' stated objective for the Al Aqsa Flood Operation to extend to the West Bank.^[3]
- The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) conducted airstrikes on more than 500 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)-affiliated positions, including operational headquarters in Gaza on October 9.^[4] The Israeli defense minister imposed a "complete siege" on Gaza, which cut off over two million people from electricity, food, water, and fuel.^[5] Israel has mobilized 300,000 military reservists in Israel amid reports of preparations for a ground incursion into Gaza.^[6]



- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Israel | Gaza Strip and West Bank | Ⓜ Hamas Infiltration |
| Israeli Settlements | 💣 Rocket Attacks | ⚔️ Clash (Small Arms Combat) |
| Lebanon and Jordan | | |

* Note: The pictured infiltration line is notional for illustrative purposes and does not denote a specific infiltration vector.

West Bank Militias Join Fighting and Conduct Rocket Attack on Jerusalem as of October 9, 2023, 3:30 PM ET



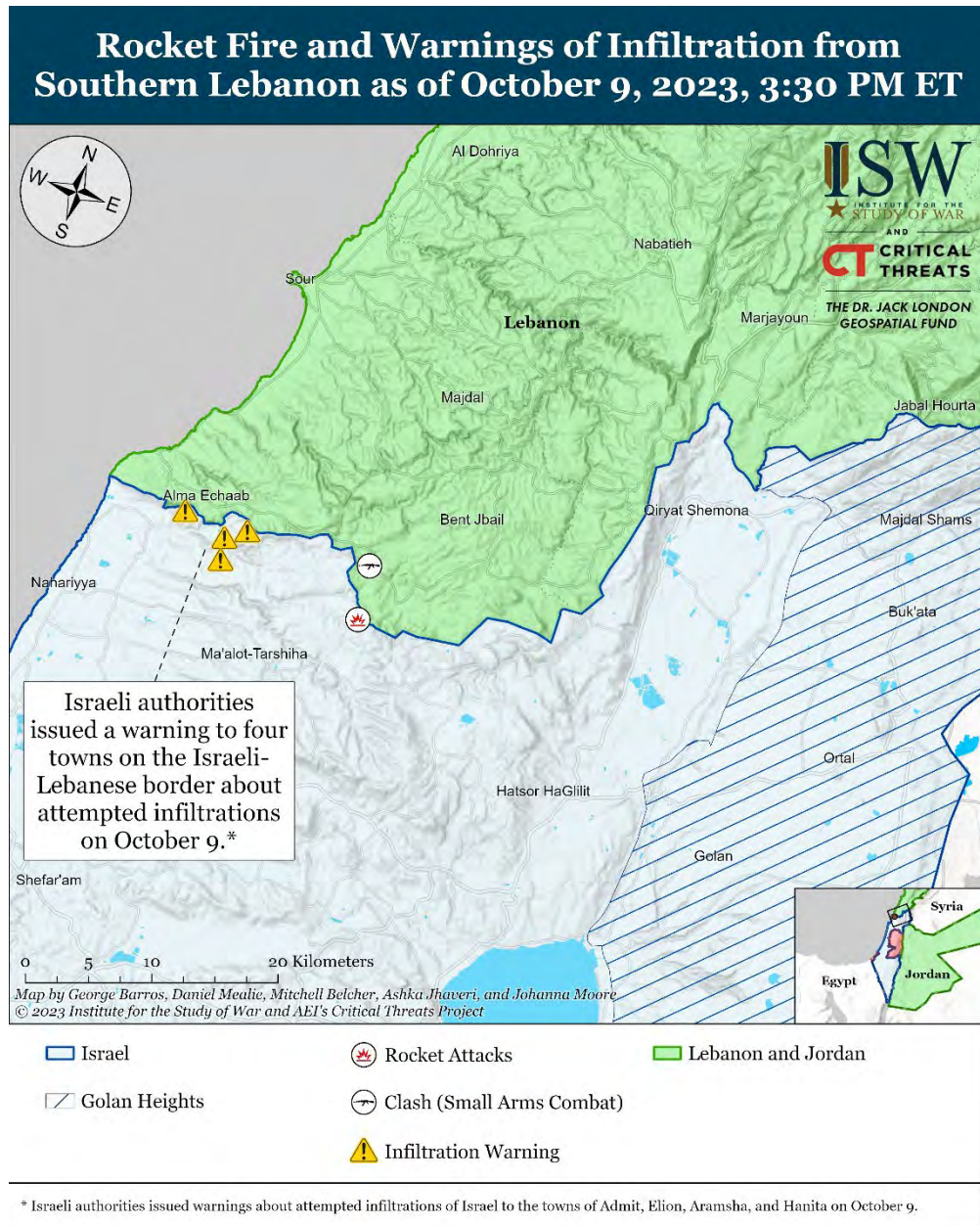
Members of the Axis of Resistance have issued threats that may lead the war between Israel and Palestinian militias to expand into the region.

Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanani said separately on October 9 that Iran would give a “devastating response” to any Israeli attack on Iran. This follows a warning from an unidentified Iranian official that Iran would respond to an Israeli attack on Iran with missile strikes from across the Middle East. ISW previously assessed that LH and Palestinian militia attacks could expand Hamas’s war with Israel into a second front.[7]

- An unidentified Iranian official told Western media on October 8 that Iran would respond to an Israeli attack with missile strikes on Israel from Iran, Lebanon, and Yemen.[8] Missile strikes from Lebanon and Yemen would require the Iranian-backed militants in these countries—LH and the Houthi movement, respectively—to conduct the strikes. The official added that Iran would send fighters into Israel from Syria to attack northern and eastern Israel.
- Head of the Iranian-backed Badr Organization Hadi al Ameri threatened to attack US forces if the United States intervened in the war to support Israel.[9] Ameri’s statement came after the United States announced it would send a carrier strike group to the eastern Mediterranean Sea to support Israel and supply Israeli forces with military equipment and ammunition. Iranian-backed militias in Iraq attacked US

forces in Syria in March while Ameri advocated for diplomatic engagement with the United States to resolve issues in Iraq.[10]

- LH conducted artillery strikes into Israel for the second consecutive day and at least six PIJ members attempted to cross into Israeli territory from southern Lebanon.[11] The Israeli government threatened to attack LH with the assistance of the US carrier strike group if LH continued to engage in the war with Hamas. Israel also warned that it would consider striking Damascus, Syria.[12]



The war in Israel is the focus of international attention, and Iran may exploit the situation to advance one or more of its strategic objectives. The table below lists some of Iran's strategic objectives, their status, and how Iran could advance them.

Objective	Status	Potential Advancement
Nuclear Program	Reduced its production rate of highly enriched uranium (HEU) and diluted a small portion of its HEU stockpile. Installing a new advanced centrifuge cascade and plans to install several more, however. ¹³	Accelerates the rate of HEU enrichment. Increases stockpile of HEU.
Develop the Syrian Defense Industry	Seeks for Syria to produce advanced conventional weapons, including manufacturing missiles and UAVs. ¹⁴ Israel conducted numerous airstrikes in 2023 that disrupt weapons production facilities in Syria. ¹⁵	Transports advanced conventional weapons into Syria for assembly, as well as components for to support weapons the production of ballistic missiles, surface-to-air-missiles, and UAVs.
Arms Transfers with Russia	Negotiating the sale of advanced conventional weapons to Russia. ¹⁶	Secures agreement for the sale of Iranian drones and/or ballistic missiles to Russia.
Expel the United States from Syria	Iran, Russia, and the Syrian regime are coordinating a coercive campaign to expel the United States from Syria. ¹⁷	Accelerates arming and aiding to the Arab tribes to counter the US-backed Syria Democratic Forces. Directs an attack on US forces in Syria to compel the United States to withdraw from the country.

The Iranian regime is categorically denying Iran's involvement in Hamas's ground and air attack against Israel. The *Wall Street Journal* reported on October 8 that Iran helped plan the Al Aqsa Flood Operation in meetings with representatives from Hamas, LH, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in Beirut since August 2023.^[18] Iran's Mission to the United Nations emphasized Iran's "unflinching support" for Palestine but denied any Iranian involvement in the Al Aqsa Flood Operation in a statement on October 8.^[19] Political advisor to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei Ali Shamkhani similarly described the Palestinian resistance movement as an "independent movement" on October 8.^[20] Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanani responded directly to the *Wall Street Journal's* allegations on October 9, describing them as "based on political motives."^[21]

- US and Israeli officials have responded cautiously to reports of Iranian involvement in Hamas's attack. US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken stated on October 8 that the US government has not yet seen evidence that Iran directed or was behind the October 7 attack. Blinken noted, however, that Iran and Hamas have a "long relationship."^[22] Israel Defense Forces spokesperson Brigadier General Daniel Hagari stated on October 9 that the Israeli military cannot yet determine whether Iran was involved in planning or training for the attack.^[23]
- Iran and Hamas improved relations in 2014 following a series of disagreements on regional developments in the early 2010s.^[24] Iran has since then provided extensive material and financial support to Hamas. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant claimed in April 2023 that Iran annually sends \$100 million to Hamas, \$700 million to LH, and tens of millions of dollars to PIJ.^[25]

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) deployed forces to the southwestern Syrian border on October 9, however. Iran has built up a large military footprint in Syria to include weapons storage facilities, headquarters, and barracks to house its affiliated militias. The Iranian and LH-directed deployments are consistent with the scenario in which the Gaza War expands into a multi-front war surrounding Israel.

- Iran instructed the IRGC in eastern Syria to deploy militants to Quneitra Province on October 9.^[26] The IRGC transferred 50 foreign fighters to Damascus on October 9 who are capable of using anti-aircraft missiles and rockets.^[27]

- An IRGC officer oversaw the deployment of Syrian Arab Army and IRGC deployments to the border strip with Israeli territory from Sayyida Zeinab which Iran uses as an operational headquarters.[28] The LH Radwan Unit, which is a special unit focused on infiltrating Israeli territory, arrived in Syria to spread out along the border with Israel as well.[29]

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[2] <https://t.me/areennabluss/282>; [https://www\(dot\)israelhayom\(dot\)com/2022/10/16/minor-incidents-could-spark-widespread-unrest-defense-official-warns/](https://www(dot)israelhayom(dot)com/2022/10/16/minor-incidents-could-spark-widespread-unrest-defense-official-warns/)

[3] [https://www\(dot\)israelhayom\(dot\)com/2022/10/16/minor-incidents-could-spark-widespread-unrest-defense-official-warns/](https://www(dot)israelhayom(dot)com/2022/10/16/minor-incidents-could-spark-widespread-unrest-defense-official-warns/)

[4] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1711236045965042148>

[5] <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/09/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-siege-ha...>

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[7] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-special-edition-oct...>

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[9] [https://shafaq\(dot\)](https://shafaq(dot)com/ar/%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D8%B0%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%AF%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AF%D8%AE%D9%84-%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7-%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%81)

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[10] [https://shafaq\(dot\)](https://shafaq(dot)com/ar/%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D9%85%D9%88%D9%82%D9%81-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%AF-%D9%84%D9%80-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%82%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B8%D9%81-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85-%D9%81%D9%)

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[11] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1711360841319153854> ; <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-military-says-its-troo...> ; [https://www\(dot\)almayadeen\(dot\)net/news/politics/%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86--%D9%82%D8%B5%D9%81-%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%AA%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B6%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89](https://www(dot)almayadeen(dot)net/news/politics/%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86--%D9%82%D8%B5%D9%81-%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%AA%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B6%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89)

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[12] <https://t.co/F2aiOleCkM>

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- [29] [https://israel-alma \(dot\) org/2023/01/05/the-radwan-unit-radwan-force-unit-125/;](https://israel-alma (dot) org/2023/01/05/the-radwan-unit-radwan-force-unit-125/) <https://twitter.com/nourabohsn/status/1711431172310384695>

IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 11, 2023

Iran Update, October 11, 2023

Andie Parry, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, Annika Ganzeveld, and Amin Soltani

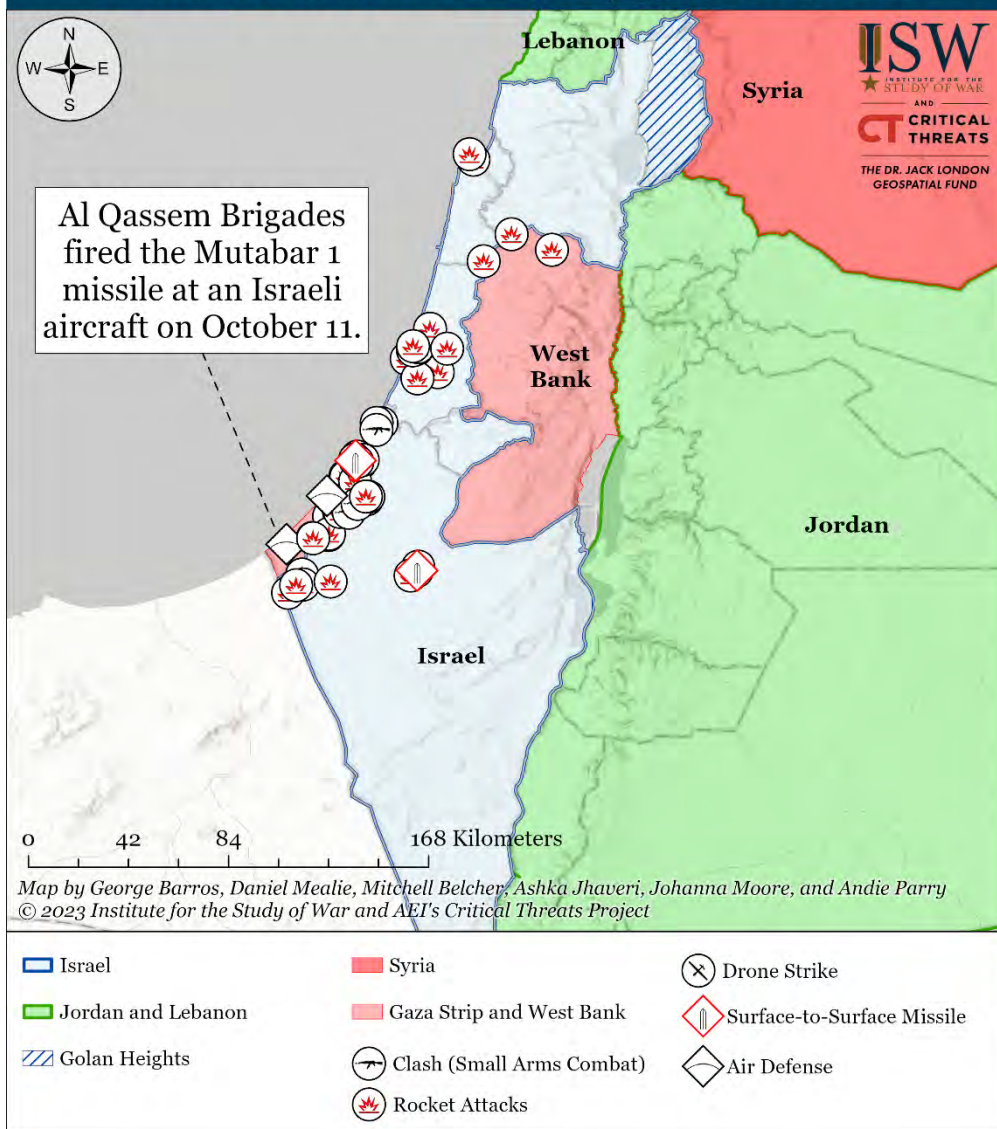
The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates daily. 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 war in Israel. 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.

Key Takeaways

- Incursions by Hamas into southern Israel have slowed since October 9. Palestinian militias in Gaza are using drones and rockets to strike towns in northern and southern Israel.
- The Lions' Den—a West Bank-based Palestinian militia—mobilized supporters to hold marches and engage in small arms clashes with Israeli security forces. Hamas is calling on its supporters in the West Bank to storm Jerusalem on October 13.
- Lebanese Hezbollah fired missiles, including anti-tank munitions, at Israeli security forces in northern Israel.
- Members of Iran's Axis of Resistance have articulated the thresholds at which they would intervene in the war against Israel. These threats highlight the risk of the war expanding throughout the region.

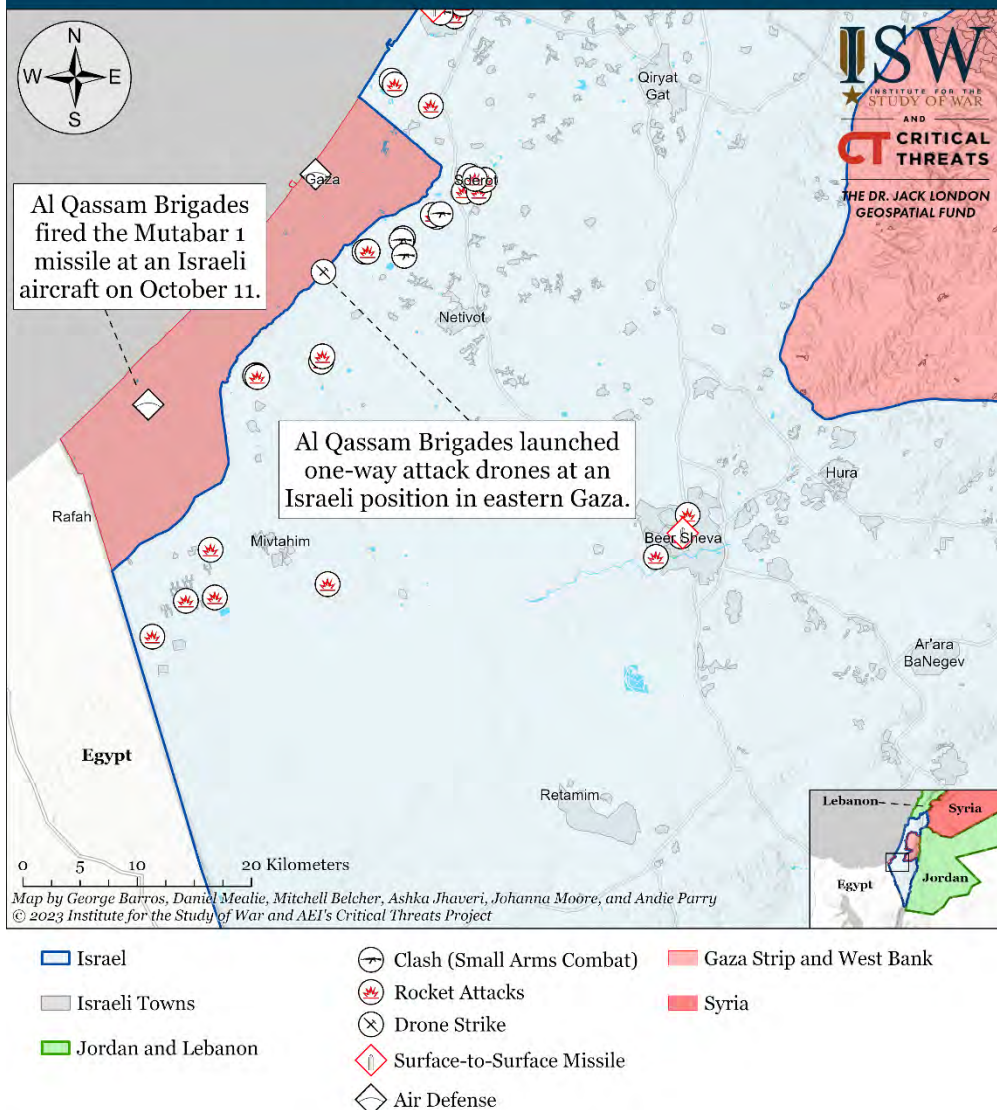
Attacks into Israel from Gaza from October 10 to 11, 3:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip

Hamas incursions into southern Israel by land and sea have slowed since October 9.[1] Palestinian militant groups are now relying on rocket barrages and attack drones to hit towns in northern and southern Israel.[2] Rocket fire from Gaza extended north to Haifa and multiple barrages have hit Tel Aviv.[3] The Hamas spokesperson warned Israeli civilians to evacuate Ashkelon near the Gaza border before the group launched hundreds of rockets on October 10, claiming the attack was retribution for Israeli airstrikes on Gaza.[4] Hamas warnings have not preceded such rocket barrages previously. Israel conducted strikes in over 1,270 locations in Gaza and killed at least three Hamas leaders over the two-day period.[5] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson stated early on October 10 that its forces regained control of the Gaza border.[6] Clashes continued in isolated pockets immediately north and east of the Gaza Strip on October 10 and 11, however.[7]

Attacks into Israel from Gaza from October 10 to 11, 3:00 PM ET

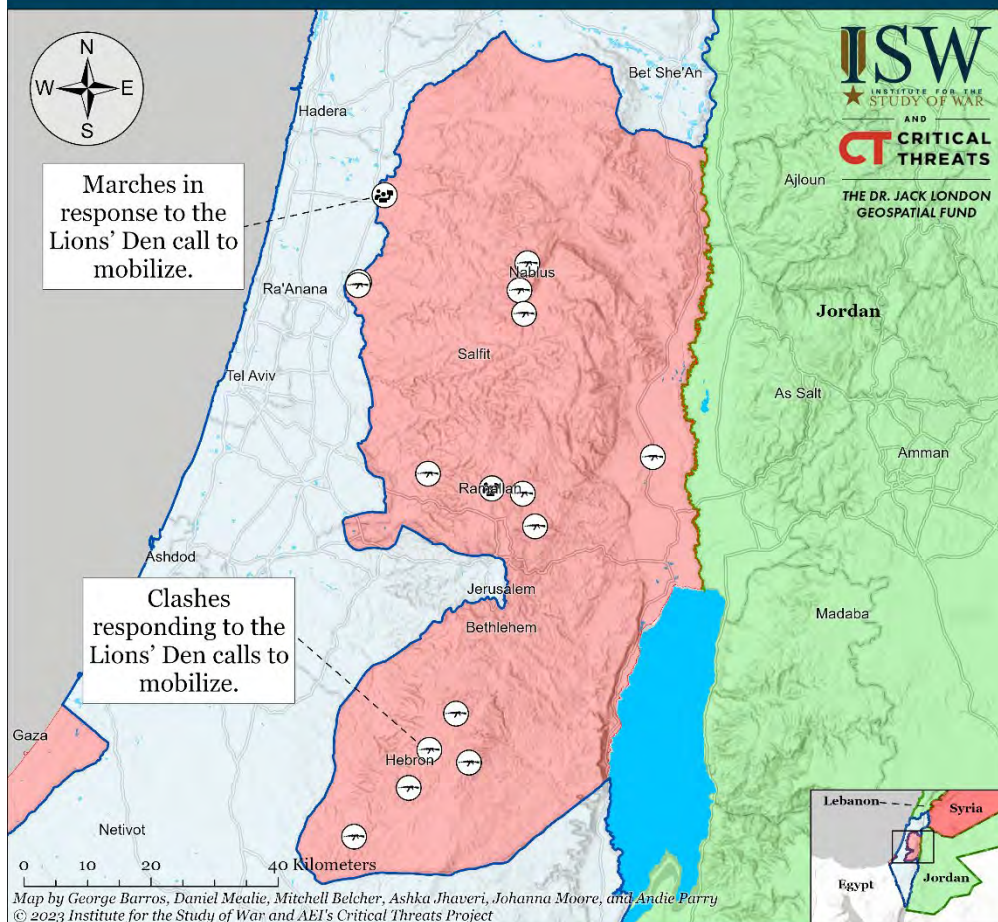


West Bank

The Lions' Den—a West Bank-based Palestinian militia—mobilized supporters to hold marches and engage in small arms clashes with Israeli security forces. Small arms clashes and marches took place in approximately 19 locations across the West Bank in response to the Lions' Den call for supporters to take to the street at 10:00 am EST.[8] Hamas released a statement separately from the Lions' Den calling on its supporters in the West Bank to storm Jerusalem on October 13.[9] These separate calls may indicate that Palestinian militias are struggling to coordinate their mobilization efforts across Gaza and the West Bank.

- Supporters of The Lion's Den last responded to the group's calls to demonstrate and conduct attacks on military and civilian targets on October 9, as CTP and ISW previously reported.[10] CTP and ISW reported that leadership from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Fatah, and the Al Quds Brigade were quick to pledge their support to Hamas's operation and issued various calls for militia members and civilians to take up arms.[11] These groups have refrained from explicitly calling on supporters to conduct acts of violence against Israelis, however.

Response to The Lions' Den Call to Mobilize in the West Bank from October 9-October 11, 3:00 PM EST



- Israel
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Clash (Small Arms Combat)
- March
- Gaza Strip and West Bank
- Syria

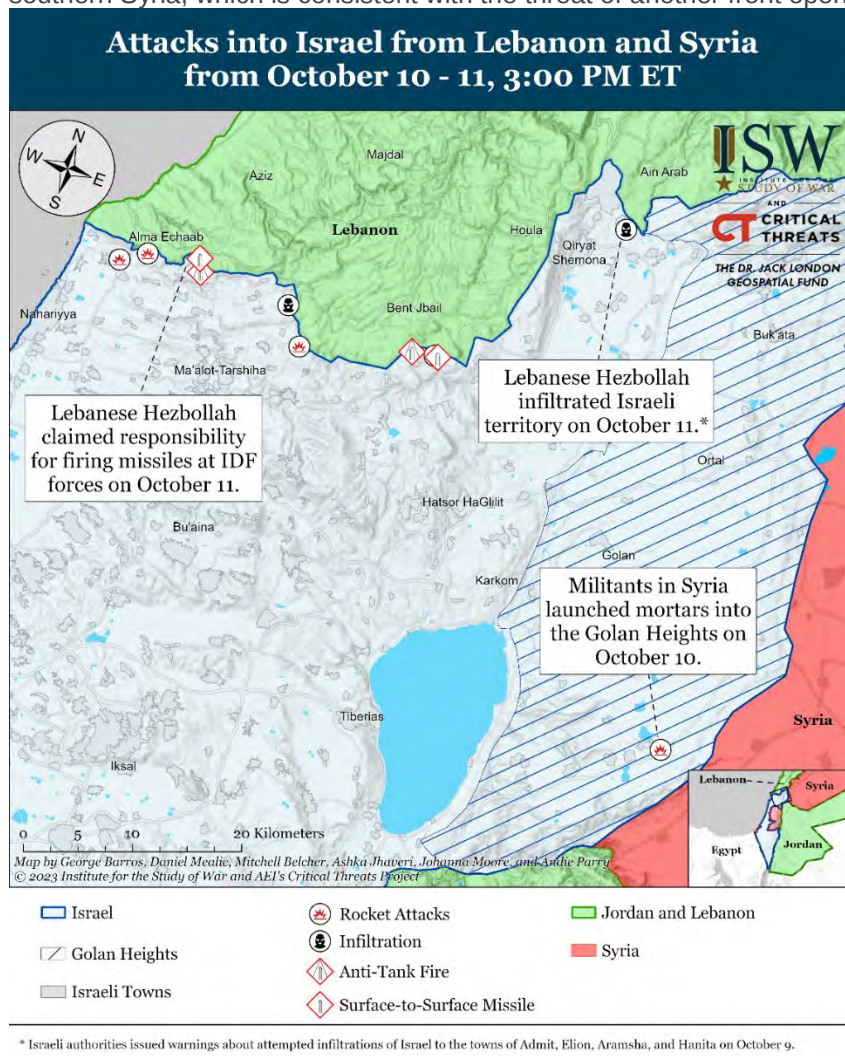
South Lebanon and the Golan Heights

Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) fired missiles, including anti-tank munitions, at Israeli security forces in northern Israel. LH claimed responsibility for firing anti-tank missiles at IDF positions in northern Israel on October 10 and 11, which prompted Israeli retaliatory attacks into Lebanon.^[12] LH said an attack using a guided missile on October 11 was a firm response to the killing of its fighters in an Israeli airstrike on October 9.^[13] LH launched an attempted infiltration to capture an Israeli town on its northern border on October 11.^[14] Unspecified militants also launched rocket barrages into open areas in northern Israel on October 9 and 10.^[15]

The IDF responded to the attacks by conducting airstrikes on LH-affiliated military sites.^[16] The IDF announced on October 11 that there was no incursion into Israeli airspace following reports of the Israeli Red Alert sirens sounding in several towns.^[17] CTP and ISW previously reported that LH conducted artillery strikes into Israel for the second consecutive day, and at least six PIJ members attempted to cross into Israeli territory from southern Lebanon from October 8-9. CTP and ISW also previously assessed that LH clashes with Israeli security forces in addition to attacks in the West Bank could expand the war into a second front.

Unidentified militants launched rockets into Israeli territory from Syria on October 10.^[18] The IDF responded to the launches with artillery and mortar fire into Syria.^[19] UK-based opposition media *Syrian Observatory for Human Rights* said a Palestinian group working with LH in Syria territory was responsible for the attack.^[20] Palestinian militants in Syria conducted rocket attacks from the Golan Heights into Israel in April 2023 in retaliation for Israeli security forces raiding the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.^[21] A pro-regime milblogger reported on October 10 that Syria will target Israeli airbases to reduce the Israeli Air Forces' ability to operate.^[22] A Syrian Arab Army soldier held up a sign praising Palestinians and pledging support.^[23] The rocket fire is the first time that militants in Syria have attacked Israel during the war and is consistent with the threat of a multi-front war against Israel.

Pro-Syrian regime forces have deployed to the border between Syria and Israeli territory since October 9. The Syrian Social Nationalist Party's (SSNP) militant wing, the Eagles of the Whirlwind, deployed forces and promised support on October 9.^[24] The SSNP is an ally of LH and has fought alongside LH militants in Beirut during the conflict in 2008.^[25] LH personnel left Deir ez Zor Province for Lebanon on October 10 although ISW cannot confirm the intention behind the deployment.^[26] The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) announced on October 11 that it seeks to recruit 1,000 men from Deir ez Zor Province for a 20–30-day training before deploying to Israel.^[27] Iran has sought to achieve total hegemony over Deir ez Zor Province since May 2023 and uses its military positioning there to threaten the US force presence in eastern Syria.^[28] The deployment to southern Syria suggests Iran is giving priority to amassing forces in southern Syria, which is consistent with the threat of another front opening in the war on Israel.



Iran and Axis of Resistance

Members of Iran's Axis of Resistance have articulated the thresholds at which they would intervene in the war against Israel. The top leadership from Iranian-backed Iraqi militias Kataib Seyyed ol Shohada, Ashab al

- Kahf, Asaib Ahl al Haq, Kataib Hezbollah, and the Badr Organization threatened to strike US targets if the United States intervenes in Hamas' war with Israel.^[29]
- Head of the Iranian-backed Badr Organization Hadi al Ameri threatened to attack US forces if the United States intervenes in the war to support Israel. Ameri's statement came after the United States announced it will send a carrier strike group to the eastern Mediterranean Sea to support Israel and will supply Israeli forces with military equipment and ammunition.^[30]
- An Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry official warned on October 9 that Iran would give a "devastating response" if Israel hit Iranian territory by attacking from Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen—implicitly drawing in actors from Iran's Axis of Resistance.^[31]

Axis of Resistance Red Lines

Members of Iran's Axis of Resistance have articulated their thresholds for intervening in support Hamas' war in Israel

Actor	Threat	Stated Red Line
Iran	Conduct missile attacks into Israel from Iran, Lebanon, and Yemen and send fighters from Syria into Israel	Israel attacks Iran
Lebanese Hezbollah	Enter the war	Israel conducts a ground operation into Gaza
Badr Organization	Attack US military positions	The United States intervenes in the war
Kataib Hezbollah Seyyeda al Shuhada	Attack US military positions	The United States intervenes in the war
Kataib Seyyed ol Shohada	Intervene in the war	The United States intervenes in the war
Houthi Movement	Conduct drone and missile strikes	The United States intervenes in the war

Graphic Sources^[32]

- Iranian officials and media accused Israel of committing war crimes in Gaza, promoted a multi-front offensive against Israel, and emphasized Israel's military and intelligence failure on October 11.** Iranian state media and officials accused Israel of using white phosphorous bombs against Gaza civilians and described Israel's siege of Gaza as a "genocide" and "massacre."^[33] White phosphorous is an incendiary chemical substance that the IDF used in military operations in Gaza between 2008 and 2009.^[34]
- Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian described Israel's siege as a "systematic war crime against humanity" during a phone call with International Red Cross head Mirjana Spoljaric Egger.^[35] Iranian state television also published a video depicting the IRGC, Hamas, LH, and Badr Organization preparing to attack Jerusalem.^[36]
 - Parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Committee member Abbas Golrou stated that the continuation of Israeli strikes on Gaza could drive non-Palestinian Arabs and LH to join the war against Israel.^[37] Golrou added that the Syrian people could use the current conflict to try to "liberate" the Golan Heights from Israel.
 - IRGC-affiliated media similarly argued that an American intervention would escalate and expand the existing conflict.^[38] Iranian officials and media also echoed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's October 10 claim that Israel has suffered an "irreparable" military and intelligence failure.^[39] Iran is messaging the above to advance the following objectives:
- Unravel the Israel-Saudi Arabia normalization process.** Western media reported throughout August and September 2023 that Israel and Saudi Arabia may be close to reaching a normalization agreement

that would include security cooperation and mutual defense.[40] Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei warned regional states on October 3 not to “gamble” their security on normalizing relations with Israel.[41] Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has furthermore been leading a political effort since October 8 to unify Arab countries in condemning the Israeli attacks on Gaza.[42] Iranian media has similarly saturated the regional media space with articles arguing that an Israeli-Saudi normalization is now impossible given Israel’s military-intelligence failure and the “genocidal” Israeli response in Gaza.[43]

- **Portray Israel as weak.** Senior Iranian political and military officials, including Supreme Leader Foreign Affairs Adviser Ali Akbar Velayati, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri, and IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami, have subsequently echoed Khamenei’s warning, arguing that the October 7 Hamas attack demonstrated Israel’s military weakness and therefore its inability to provide security to the states seeking to normalize relations with it.[44]
- **Generate momentum for further conflict.** Iranian officials and media have since October 8 repeatedly referenced Israel’s military weakness and intelligence failures during the Hamas surprise attack, portraying Israel as vulnerable.[45] These same officials and media have used the Israeli response to the attack to portray Israel as “genocidal.”[46] Several Iranian-backed militant groups and other non-Iranian-backed groups have since expressed interest in joining the conflict with Israel. Western and Israeli officials and media have expressed concern about the potential expansion of the conflict to areas beyond Gaza and to groups other than Hamas.[47] Iranian officials have previously outlined Iran’s long-term strategy to eventually embroil Israel in a multi-front war.[48]

Iranian officials continued to deny on October 10 and 11 Iran’s involvement in Hamas’ ground and air attack against Israel. The *Wall Street Journal* reported on October 8 that Iran had helped plan the Al Aqsa Flood Operation in meetings with representatives from Hamas, LH, and PIJ in Beirut since August 2023.[49] Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei praised Hamas’ attack but denied any Iranian involvement in a speech at the Imam Ali Army Officer University in Tehran on October 10.[50] Khamenei stated that individuals who believe Iran was involved “underestimate” the Palestinians’ ability to conduct attacks on their own. Khamenei stressed that Israel brought the attack upon itself by committing crimes against Palestinians “for many years.” Hardline and reformist officials reiterated Iran’s non-involvement in the conflict on October 11.[51]

[1] https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/34626 ; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/34574

[2] <https://t.me/hamasps/16578> ; https://twitter.com/no_itsmyturn/status/1711687530825871757 ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28443>

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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 12, 2023

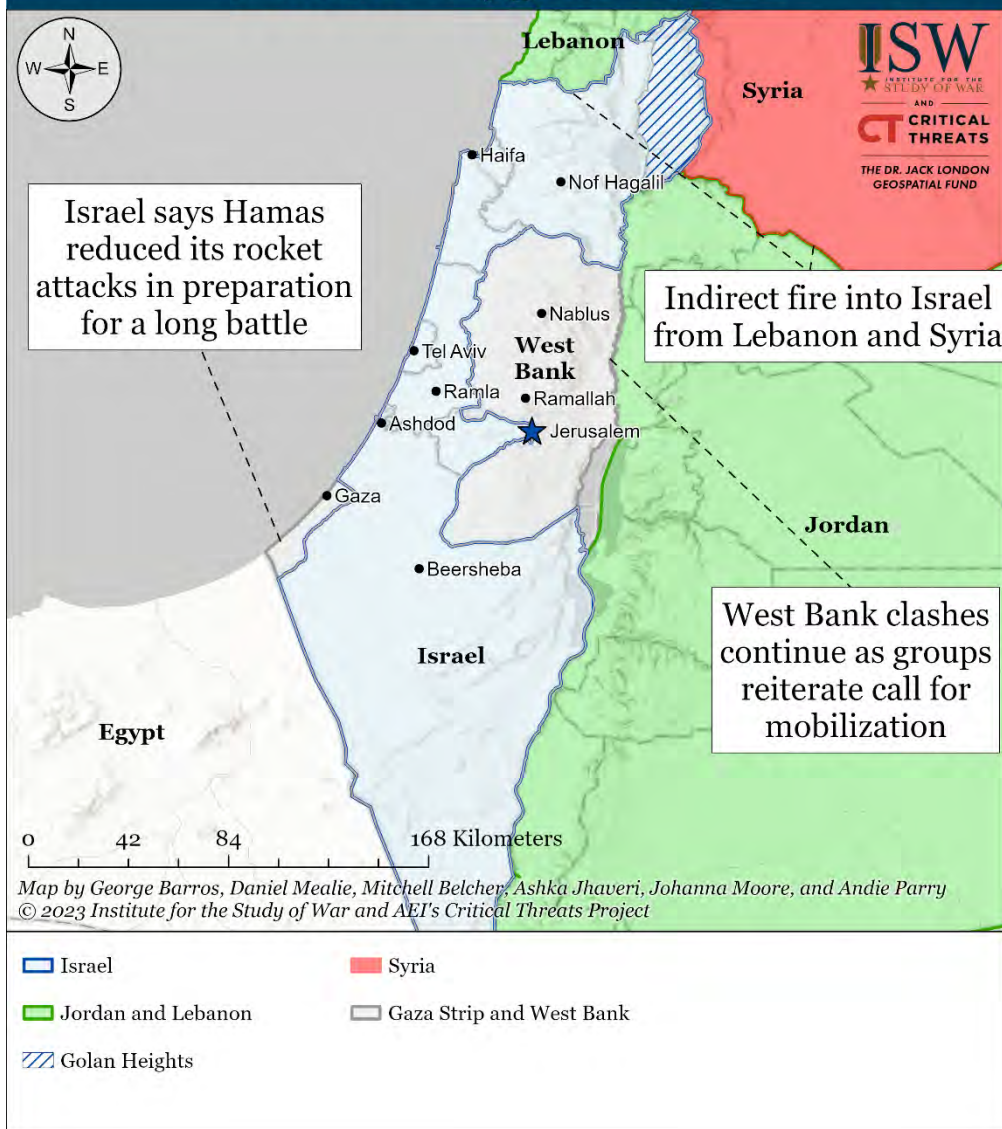
Iran Update, October 12, 2023

Andie Parry, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, Annika Ganzeveld, Amin Soltani, and Nicholas Carl

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 war in Israel. 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.

War in Israel as of October 12, 3:00 PM ET

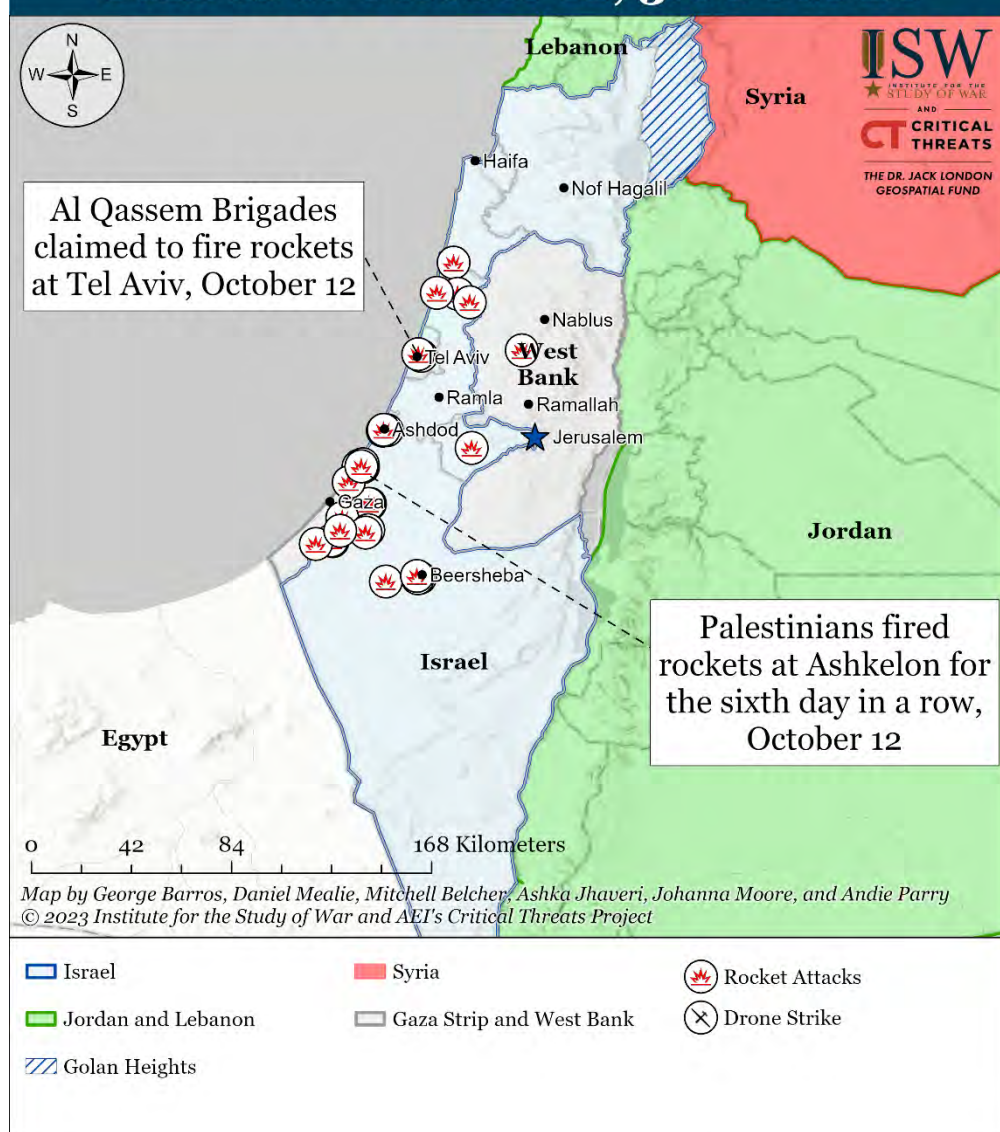


Key Takeaways:

1. Hamas continued rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel but reduced the rate of these attacks.
2. Small arms clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces increased slightly across the West Bank, as Palestinian militias try to stoke conflict there.
3. CTP-ISW recorded three rocket strikes into Israeli territory from Lebanon.
4. Unidentified Iranian officials implicitly threatened to direct proxy attacks against US forces in Iraq and Syria if the United States re-freezes Iranian financial assets abroad.
5. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian is conducting a diplomatic tour to Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria, possibly to coordinate politically with senior leaders in the Axis of Resistance.
6. Iran is conducting a diplomatic campaign to unite Muslim countries against Israel.

Gaza Strip

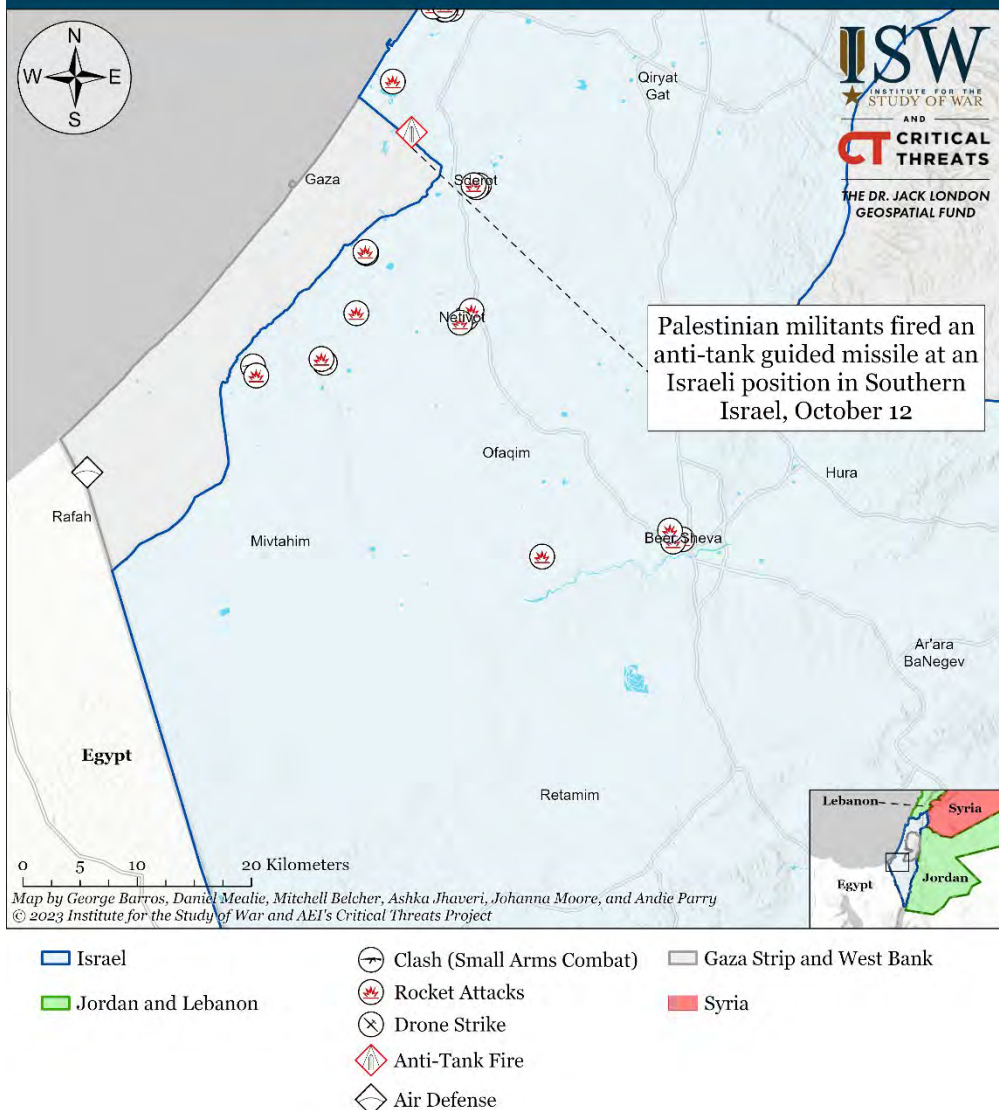
Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 12, 3:00 PM ET



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

Hamas continued rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel but reduced the rate of these attacks on October 13.^[1] An IDF commander stated that Hamas is trying to conserve its rocket stockpile and prepare for a prolonged war.^[2] Israel estimates that Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) have expended around 33 percent of their rocket arsenal since the war began on October 7.^[3] Hamas appeared to reduce the rate of its infiltrations into Israeli territory as well. CTP-ISW recorded one small arms clash between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces along the border of the Gaza Strip on October 12—a decrease from the six clashes that ISW recorded across October 10 and 11.^[4]

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 12, 3:00 PM ET

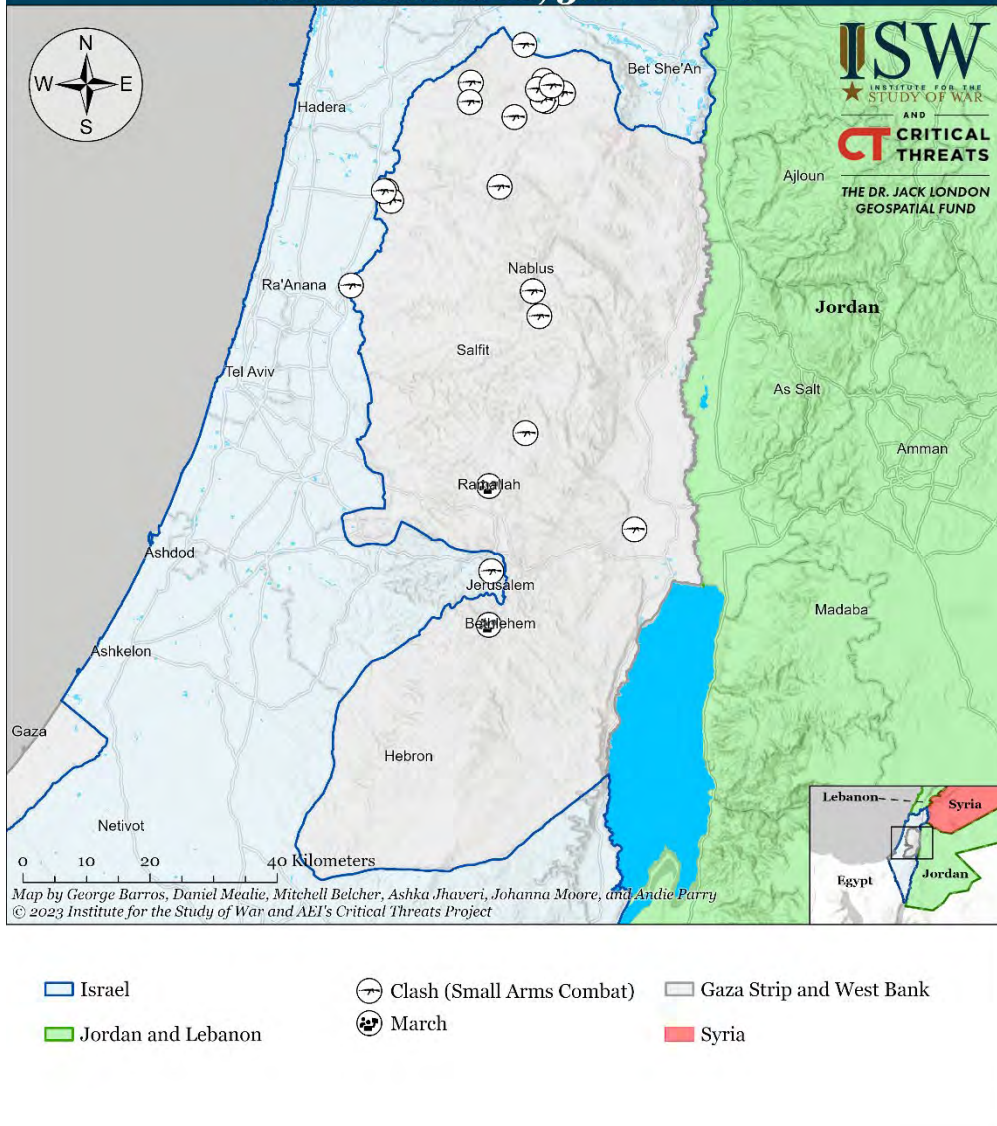


Recorded reports of rocket fire; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Hamas spokesperson Abu Ubaida released a video statement on October 12 describing the planning and objectives of the al Aqsa Flood operation.[5] Ubaida claimed that Hamas began planning the operation in 2022 and conducted extensive analysis of Israeli forces and the terrain throughout the planning process. IRGC-affiliated *Tasnim News Agency* recirculated reporting that the Palestinian resistance has prepared itself for a long-term battle, including offensive operations in Israeli territory.[6] Ubaida stated that the objective of the operation was to destroy the IDF Gaza Division and facilitate further attacks into southern Israel.[7] Hamas' militant wing has continued attacks on Israeli territory as far north as the Haifa District and has called on Palestinian militants in the West Bank to mobilize.

West Bank

West Bank Clashes Continue as Hamas, Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, and PIJ Call to Mobilize as of October 12, 3:00 PM ET



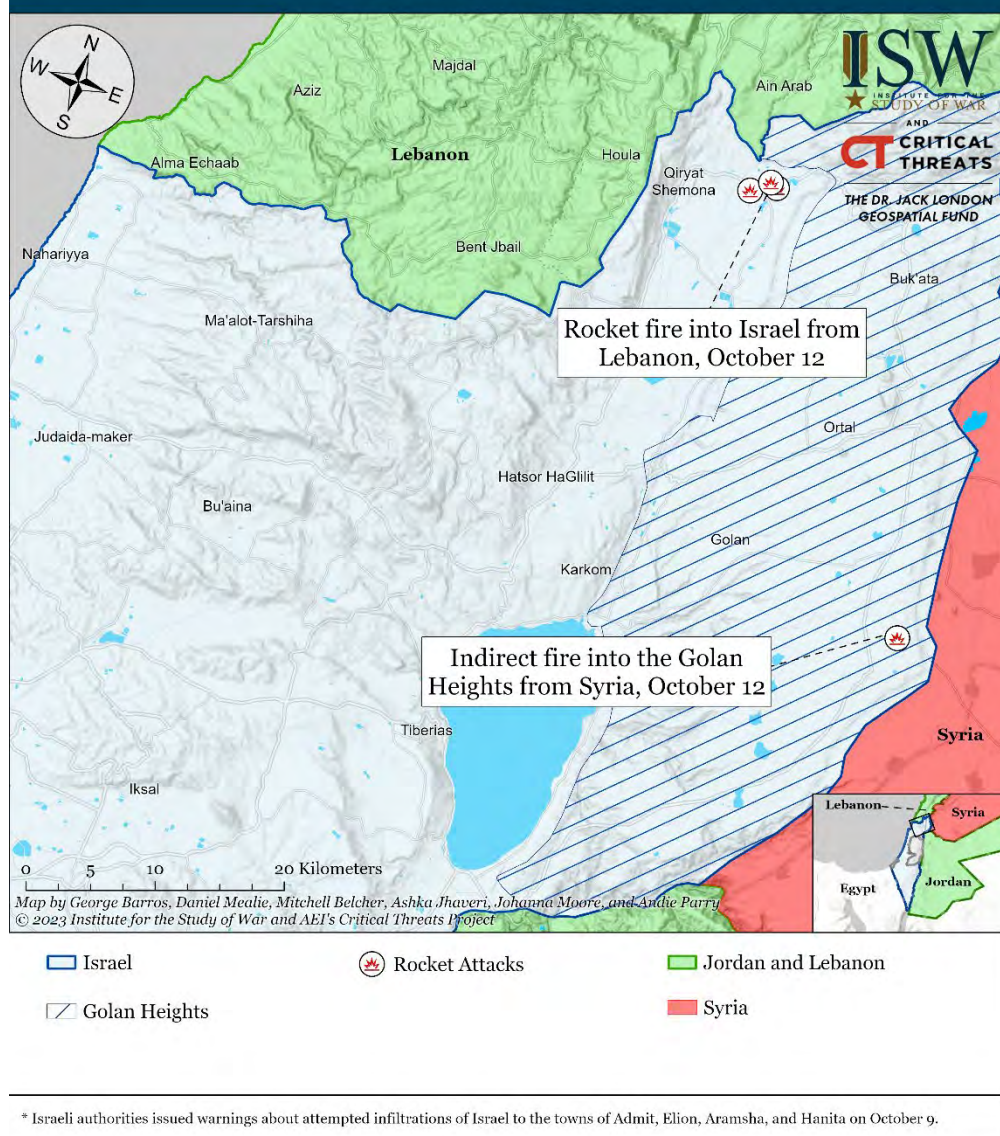
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and marches in the West Bank.

Small arms clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces increased slightly across the West Bank on October 12, as Palestinian militias try to stoke conflict there.^[8] Clashes occurred in around 21 locations.^[9] Leaders from Hamas, PIJ, and the al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade separately issued calls on October 11 and 12 urging individuals in the West Bank to mobilize and join the fight against Israel, highlighting their desire to expand the war geographically to the West Bank.^[10] PIJ spokesperson Abu Hamza boasted that the West Bank has entered the fight and called for militants to increase the rate of attacks against Israeli forces.^[11] Iranian state media recirculated these calls and celebrated the ongoing clashes.^[12]

Hamas has called for a surge in anti-Israeli activity on Friday, October 13, which risks driving further clashes.^[13] The West Bank-based Lions' Den militia previously succeeded in mobilizing supporters to hold marches and clash with Israeli forces on October 11, as CTP-ISW previously reported, suggesting that Hamas may see similar success.^[14] It is furthermore common for public participation in marches and protests in the Middle East to increase on Fridays, as such activities often follow Friday prayers.

South Lebanon and the Golan Heights

Attacks into Israel from Lebanon and Syria as of October 12, 3:00 PM ET



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

CTP-ISW recorded three rocket strikes into Israeli territory from Lebanon on October 12.^[15] This level of rocket fire is consistent with previous days' levels of kinetic activity around Israel's northern border.^[16] **The IDF conducted airstrikes on the Damascus and Aleppo international airports on October 12, disrupting critical nodes through which Iran funnels military equipment and personnel into the Levant.**^[17] The IDF struck the airport runways. The Syrian Arab Army conducted a mortar strike into the Golan Heights after the attacks, possibly as symbolic retaliation.^[18] The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has long used commercial airliners affiliated with the Iranian regime for military transports to Syria throughout the civil war there.^[19] A Mahan Air flight was en route from Tehran to Damascus around the time of the IDF airstrikes and then changed course back to Iran.^[20] The United States has sanctioned Mahan Air for transporting military personnel and materiel on behalf of the IRGC Quds Force to Syria to support the Iranians' efforts to defend the Bashar al Assad regime and entrench the Iranian military influence around the Levant.^[21]

Iran and the Axis of Resistance

Unidentified Iranian officials implicitly threatened to direct proxy attacks against US forces in Iraq and Syria if the United States re-freezes Iranian financial assets abroad. These Iranian officials told UK-based *Amwaj Media* that the August 2023 prisoner swap deal between the United States and Iran involved a broader understanding in which Iran would pause proxy attacks against US positions in exchange for the United States allowing the release of \$6 billion worth of frozen Iranian financial assets in South Korean banks.[22] Western media reported similar details on this broader understanding at the time.[23] South Korea has gradually transferred that money to Qatari banks for Iran to access since the agreement was reached. Western media has reported that the United States and Qatar have reached an agreement to refreeze the Iranian financial assets in response to the Hamas ground and air attack into Israel.[24] CTP-ISW is updating its chart on Axis of Resistance red lines based on these reports.

Axis of Resistance Red Lines

Members of Iran's Axis of Resistance have articulated their thresholds for intervening in support of Hamas' war in Israel



 New Threat as of October 12

Actor	Threat	Stated Red Line
Iran	Conduct missile attacks into Israel from Iran, Lebanon, and Yemen and send fighters from Syria into Israel	Israel attacks Iran
	Direct its proxies to attack US positions in Iraq and Syria	United States refreezes \$6 billion to Iran
Lebanese Hezbollah	Enter the war	Israel conducts a ground operation into Gaza
Badr Organization	Attack US military positions	The United States intervenes in the war
Kataib Hezbollah	Attack US military positions	The United States intervenes in the war
Kataib Seyyed ol Shohada	Intervene in the war	The United States intervenes in the war
Houthi Movement	Conduct drone and missile strikes	The United States intervenes in the war

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian is conducting a diplomatic tour to Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria, possibly to coordinate politically with senior leaders in the Axis of Resistance. Abdollahian traveled to Baghdad and met with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani and National Security Adviser Qassem al Araj on October 12.[25] Abdollahian stated that Israel cannot commit "war crimes" against Gaza civilians "without expecting a response" during his meeting with Araj.[26] Abdollahian additionally commented on the possibility of the opening of a new front against Israel during his meeting with Sudani, stating that "everything depends on [Israeli] actions in Gaza." [27] Abdollahian will travel to Beirut and Damascus in the coming days. Abdollahian recently met with Syrian President Bashar al Assad in Damascus on August 31.[28] Abdollahian also met with Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) Secretary General Ziyad al Nakhalah, and Hamas Political Bureau Deputy Chairman Saleh al Arouri in Beirut on September 1.[29] Supreme Leader International Affairs Adviser Ali Akbar Velayati additionally held separate phone calls with Haniyeh and Nakhalah on October 11.[30] Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei commonly uses Velayati as his personal envoy abroad and especially to members of the Axis of Resistance and Palestinian groups.[31] **Iran is conducting a diplomatic campaign to unite Muslim countries against Israel.** Senior Iranian officials conducted a flurry of phone calls to foreign leaders on October 11 and 12 to discuss the war in

Israel. President Ebrahim Raisi held separate phone calls with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and Syrian President Bashar al Assad.[32] The call with Mohammad bin Salman is particularly noteworthy given that it is the first call between them since Iran and Saudi Arabia normalized ties in March 2023. Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has held phone calls with his Emirati, Egyptian, Filipino, Hungarian, Iraqi, Omani, Qatari, Russian, and Turkish counterparts since October 7.[33] Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf has held phone calls with his counterparts in Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Syria, Turkey, and the UAE.[34] Tehran has historically sought to rally Muslim countries against Israel and frame itself as a champion of the Palestinian cause. Iran conducted a similar diplomatic campaign to this end when tensions rose between Israel and the Palestinian militias in April 2023, which CTP previously reported.[35]

[1] https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-slow-rate-of-rocket-fire-suggests-hamas-readying-for-long-war

[2] https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/34752; <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1712354608717115418>

[3] <https://twitter.com/IsraelRadar/status/1712377982562562481>

[4] <https://twitter.com/IsraelReliefAid/status/1712534961075662993>; <https://twitter.com/sentdefender/status/1712099042384044251>; <https://twitter.com/JoeTruzman/status/1712113917332537610>; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/34568; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/34574; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/34568; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/34626

[5] https://t.me/spokesman_2020/47

[6] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/19/2969811>

[7] <https://telegram.me/s/hamasps>

[8] <https://t.me/Tura313/45338> ; <https://hamas.ps/ar/p/18260>

[9] Data available upon request.

[10] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/20/2970393>

; <https://t.me/Tura313/45338> ; <https://hamas.ps/ar/p/18260>

[11] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2023/10/12/2970690/islamic-jihad-says-resistance-operation-against-israel-could-expand-beyond-gaza>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/129983> www.presstv.ir/Detail/2023/10/12/712566/Palestine-Israel-Spokesman-al-Quds-Brigades-armed-wing-Islamic-Jihad-resistance--Abu-Hamza-Operation-al-Aqsa-Storm-Lebanon

[12] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/20/2970393/>

%D8%B3%D8%AE%D9%86%DA%AF%D9%88%DB%8C-%D9%86%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%B3-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%A2%D8%AA%D8%B4-%DA%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%AA%D8%B1-%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%AF-%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C%D9%86-%D8%AF%DB%8C%DA%AF%D8%B1-%DA%A9%D8%B4%DB%8C%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%AF-%D8%B4%D8%AF ; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/20/2970398/> %DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D9%87-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%BE%D8%A7-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D8%B1%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%88%DB%8C%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%DB%8C%D9%86%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%86%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B5%D9%87%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA

[13] https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/34461 ; <https://t.me/hamasps/16601> ; <https://t.me/hamasps/16608> ; <https://hamas.ps/ar/p/18260>

[14] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-11-2023>

[15] <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1712470506451112030> ; <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1712470506451112030>

[16] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-11-2023>

[17] <https://www.facebook.com/mod.gov.sy/posts/pfbid0WpU9dTfBpMVHbobWo4kwZEiV...> ; https://t.me/mihar_al mugawama/34798 ; <https://t.me/maymun5/52141> ; <https://twitter.com/AuroraIntel/status/1712523324922667203>

[18] <https://twitter.com/rien4djri/status/1712470496124797348> ; <https://twitter.com/nourabohsn/status/1712511236187857080>

[19] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/irans-airbridge-to-syria>

[20] <https://twitter.com/AuroraIntel/status/1712427349147312129>

[21] <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm1098#:~:text=On%20July%2...>'s%20support%20to%20proxy

[22] <https://amwaj dot media/article/inside-story-will-biden-join-trump-in-reneging-on-us-deals-with-iran>

[23] <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/14/us/politics/biden-iran-nuclear-progra...> ; <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-launches-quiet-diplomatic-push-with-ira...> ; <https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-slows-buildup-of-near-weapons-grade-en...> ; <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/10/us/politics/iran-us-prisoners-nuclear...>

[24] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/10/12/iran-oil-fund-us-israel/> ; <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mollybohannon/2023/10/12/iran-barred-from-a...>

[25] <https://www.irna dot ir/news/85256316> ; <https://www.irna dot ir/news/85256451> ; <https://www.irna dot ir/news/85256416>

[26] <https://www.mashregnews dot ir/news/1535405>

[27] <https://www.eghtesadnews dot com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C-57/603624-%D9%87%D8%B4%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%AA%D9%84-%D8%A2%D9%88%DB%8C%D9%88-%D9%87%D9%85%D9%87-%DA%86%DB%8C%D8%B2-%D8%A8%D8%B3%D8%AA%DA%AF%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%DB%8C%D9%84-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF>

[28] <https://www.almanar dot com.lb/10909692>

[29] <https://www.almanar dot com.lb/10913597> ; <https://www.almanar dot com.lb/10912673>

[30] <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1402/07/19/2970346>

[31] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-february-27-2023>

[32] <https://president dot ir/fa/147086> ; <https://president dot ir/fa/147088>

[33] <https://www.mehrnews dot com/news/5906400> ; <https://www.dailysabah dot com/politics/diplomacy/fm-fidan-discusses-israel-palestine-tensions-with-counterparts> ; <https://www.farsnews dot ir/en/news/14020717000297> ; <https://www.irna dot ir/news/85253127> ; <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1402/07/17/2969142> ; <https://en.isna dot ir/news/1402071912863> ; <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1402/07/18/2969785> ; <https://mfa dot ir/portal/newsview/731261> ; <https://mfa dot ir/portal/newsview/731320>

[34] <https://www.irna dot ir/news/85256286>

[35] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-april-7-2023>

IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 13, 2023

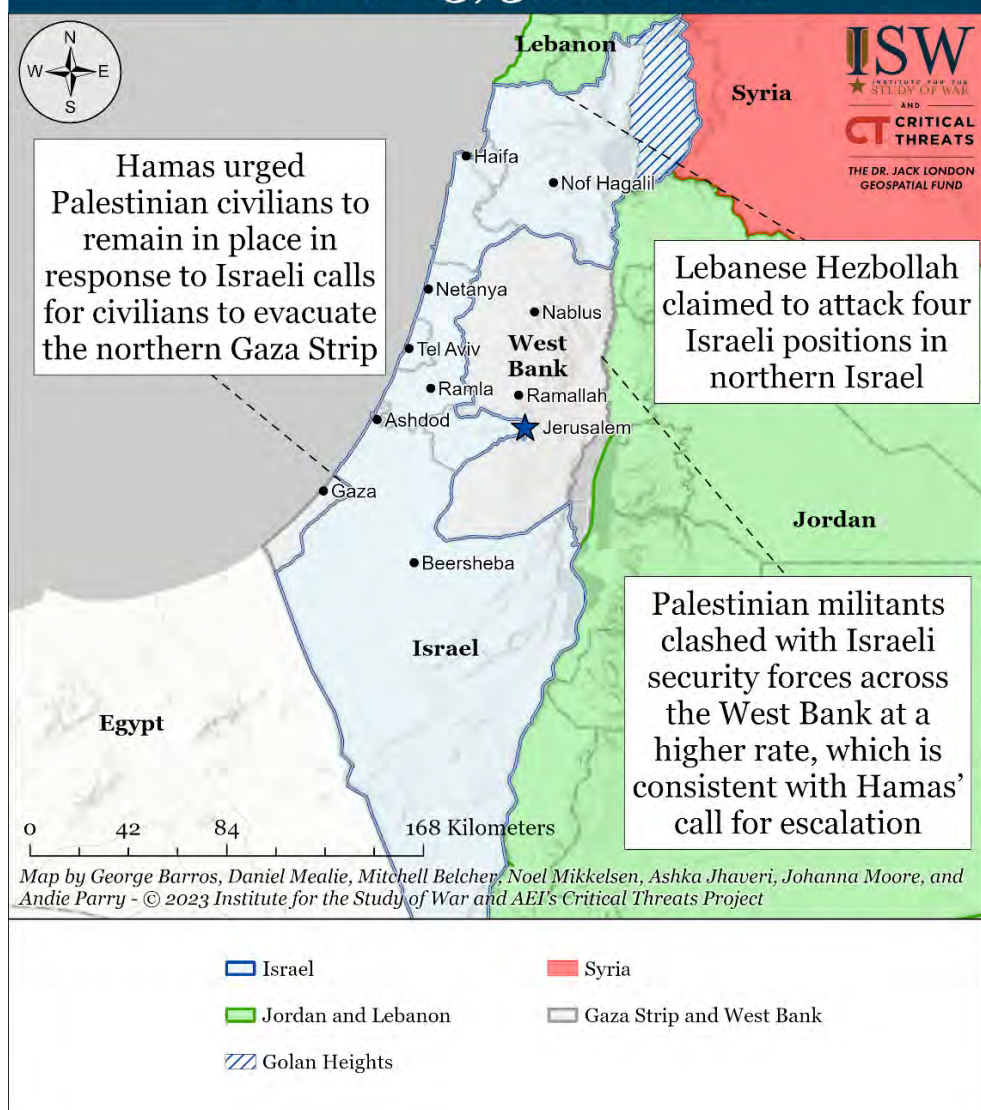
Iran Update, October 13, 2023

Ashka Jhaveri, Amin Soltani, and Nicholas Carl

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.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 13, 3:00 PM ET

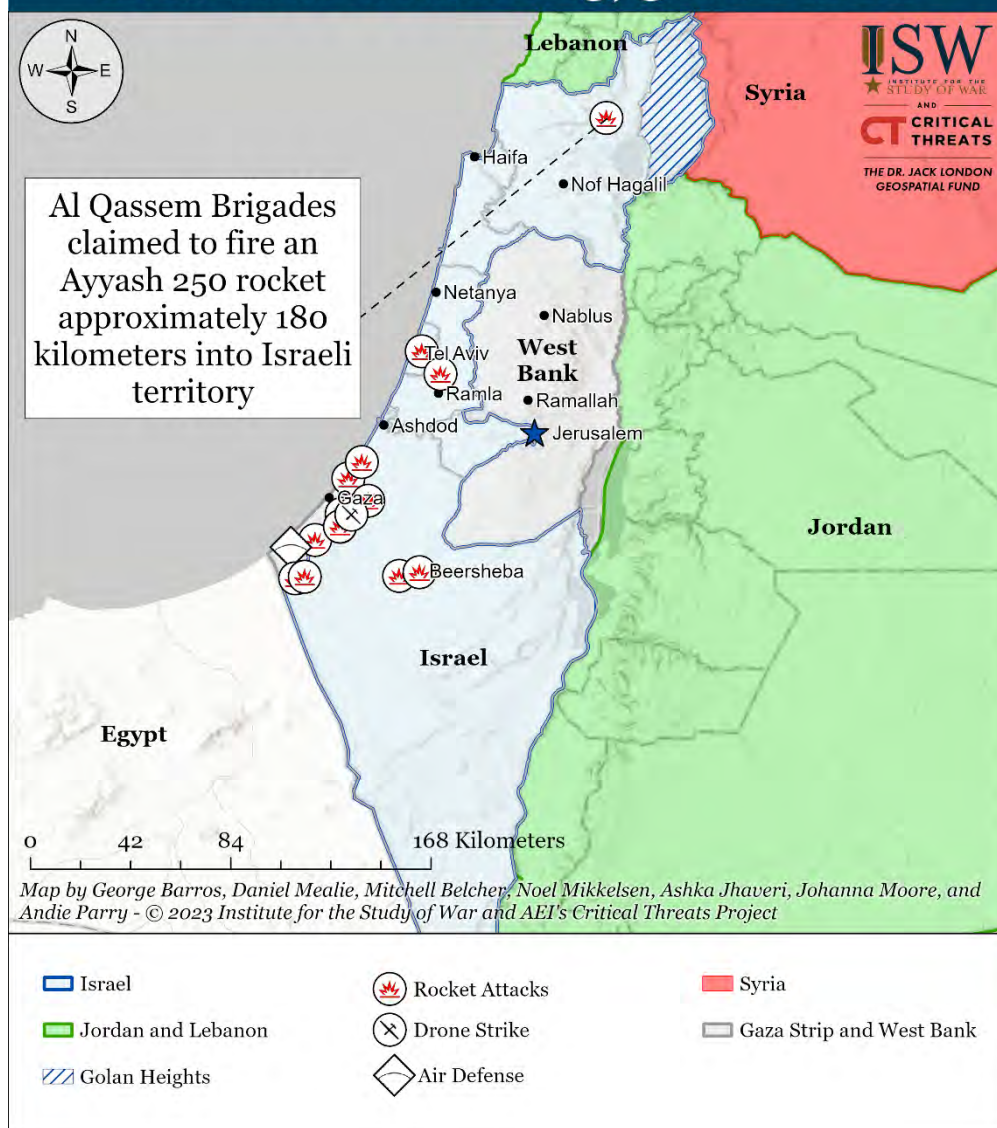


Key Takeaways:

- Hamas continued conducting rocket attacks into Israel at a lower rate of fire compared to previous days. The group also urged Palestinian civilians to remain in place in response to Israeli calls for civilians to evacuate the northern Gaza Strip.
- Palestinian militants clashed with Israeli security forces across the West Bank at a higher rate, which is consistent with Hamas' call for escalation.
- The Iranian regime is messaging that US and Israeli actions could expand the war beyond Israel and the Palestinian territories while trying to intensify violence against Israel in the West Bank.

Gaza Strip

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 13, 3:00 PM ET

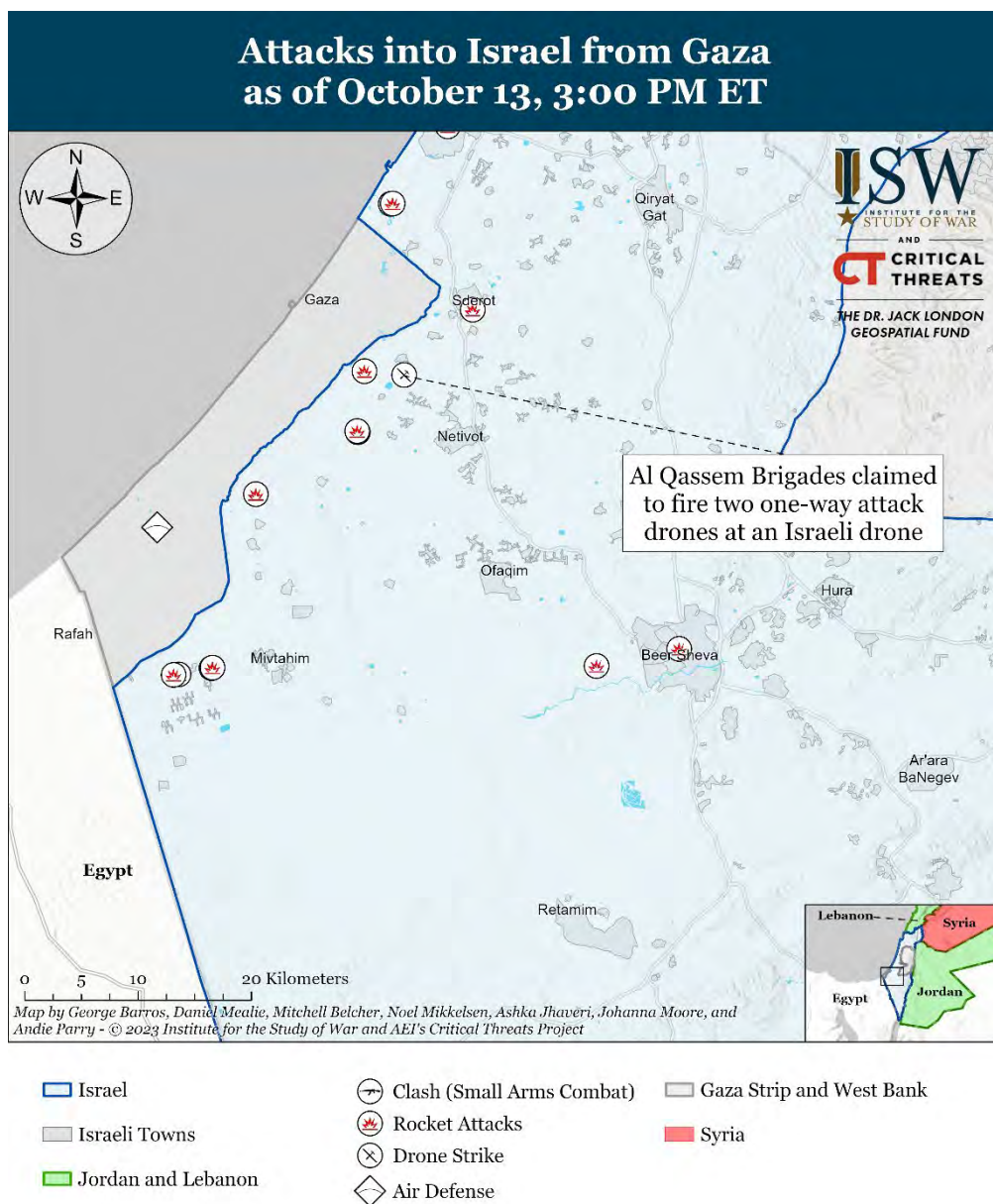


Recorded reports of rocket fire; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Hamas continued conducting rocket attacks into Israel at a lower rate of fire on October 13 compared to previous days. Hamas began reducing its rate of attacks on October 12 to conserve its rocket stockpile and prepare for a prolonged war, as CTP and ISW previously reported. Hamas targeted northern, central, and southern Israel on October 13. Hamas' military spokesman announced that the group fired 150 rockets at Ashkelon, 50 rockets at Sderot, and bombed the Ben Gurion Airport in central Israel.[1] Israeli civilians have evacuated the periphery areas of Gaza.[2] Hamas' al Qassem Brigades claimed that the rocket barrages are in response to Israel's displacement and targeting of civilians.[3] The IDF's operational update on October 13 notes that militants have launched 6,000 rockets from Gaza.[4] CTP-ISW previously reported that Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) have expended around 33 percent of their rocket arsenal since the war began.

- The IDF intercepted an Ayyash 250 rocket that Hamas launched from the Gaza Strip toward the IDF Northern Region Command headquarters in Safed. Safed is the furthest location that Hamas has targeted since the war began on October 7.[5]

- CTP-ISW also recorded several other rockets launches by PIJ and the al Qassem Brigades into Israel as of October 13, including the al Qassem Brigades launching two al Zouari one-way attack drones at IDF soldiers in Saad and a Mutabar 1 air defense missile at an Israeli drone flying over Gaza.[6]



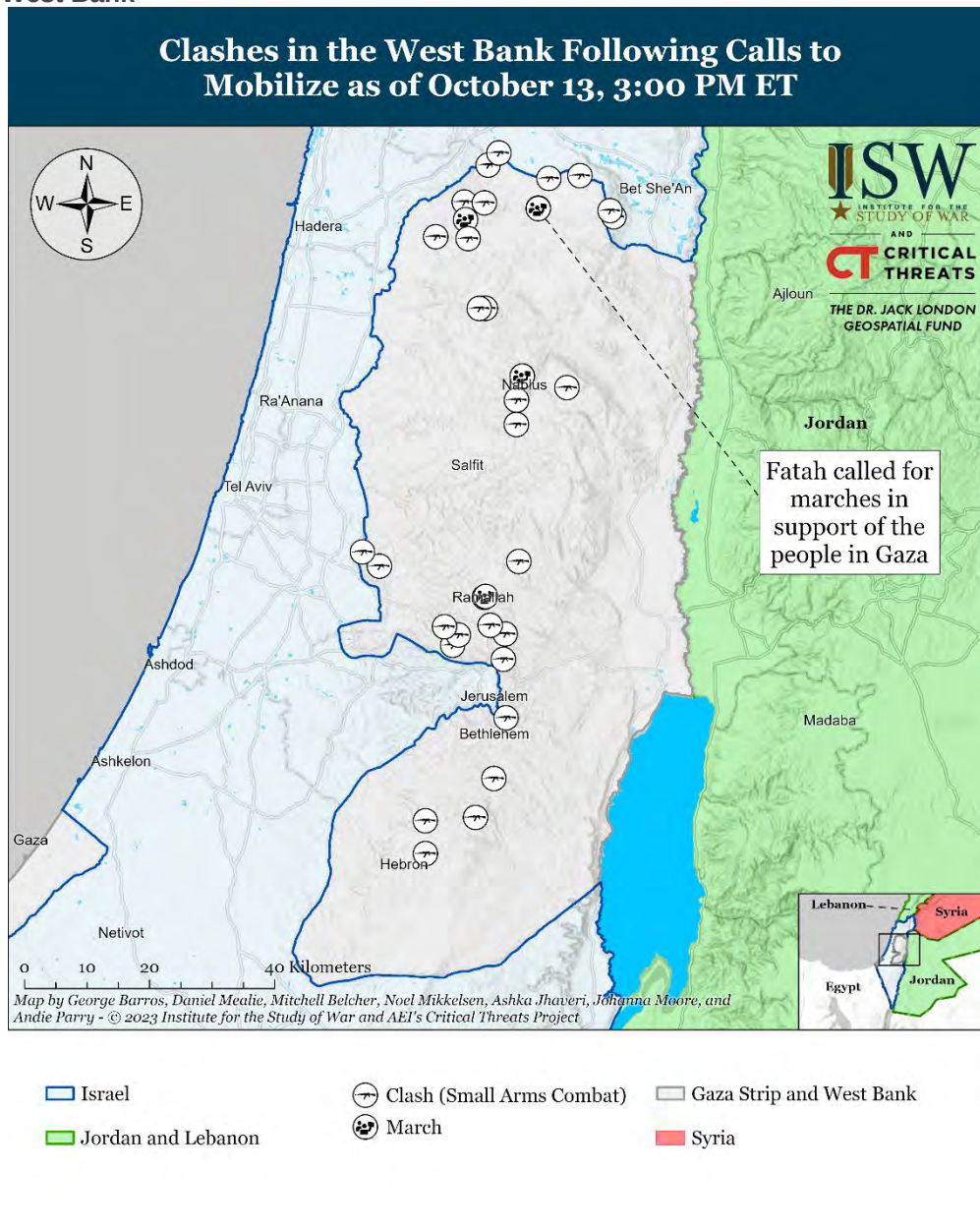
Recorded reports of rocket fire; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

CTP-ISW recorded one clash between Palestinian militants and Israeli security forces in Israeli territory on October 12. This reflects a decrease compared to the first few days of the war, when Hamas militants engaged in fierce fighting across southern Israel.[7]

Hamas urged Palestinian civilians to remain in place in response to Israeli calls for civilians to evacuate the northern Gaza Strip on October 13.[8] The IDF informed the UN on October 12 that the 1.1 million residents in northern Gaza should relocate within the next 24 hours.[9] The IDF said in the coming days it is expected to continue to operate significantly in Gaza City and wants to avoid harming civilians.[10] Hamas spokesperson Abu Ubaida described the call as “psychological warfare” against Palestinians and urged locals to stay.[11] Hamas continues to use civilians as human shields, which intentionally puts these civilians in harm’s way, to protect Hamas’ military infrastructure and weapons.[12] Civilians leaving the northern Gaza Strip en masse would risk depriving Hamas of the ability

to use regular civilian activity to mask its military activities. The UN reported that 423,000 out of 2.3 million people in Gaza are now internally displaced.[13]

West Bank



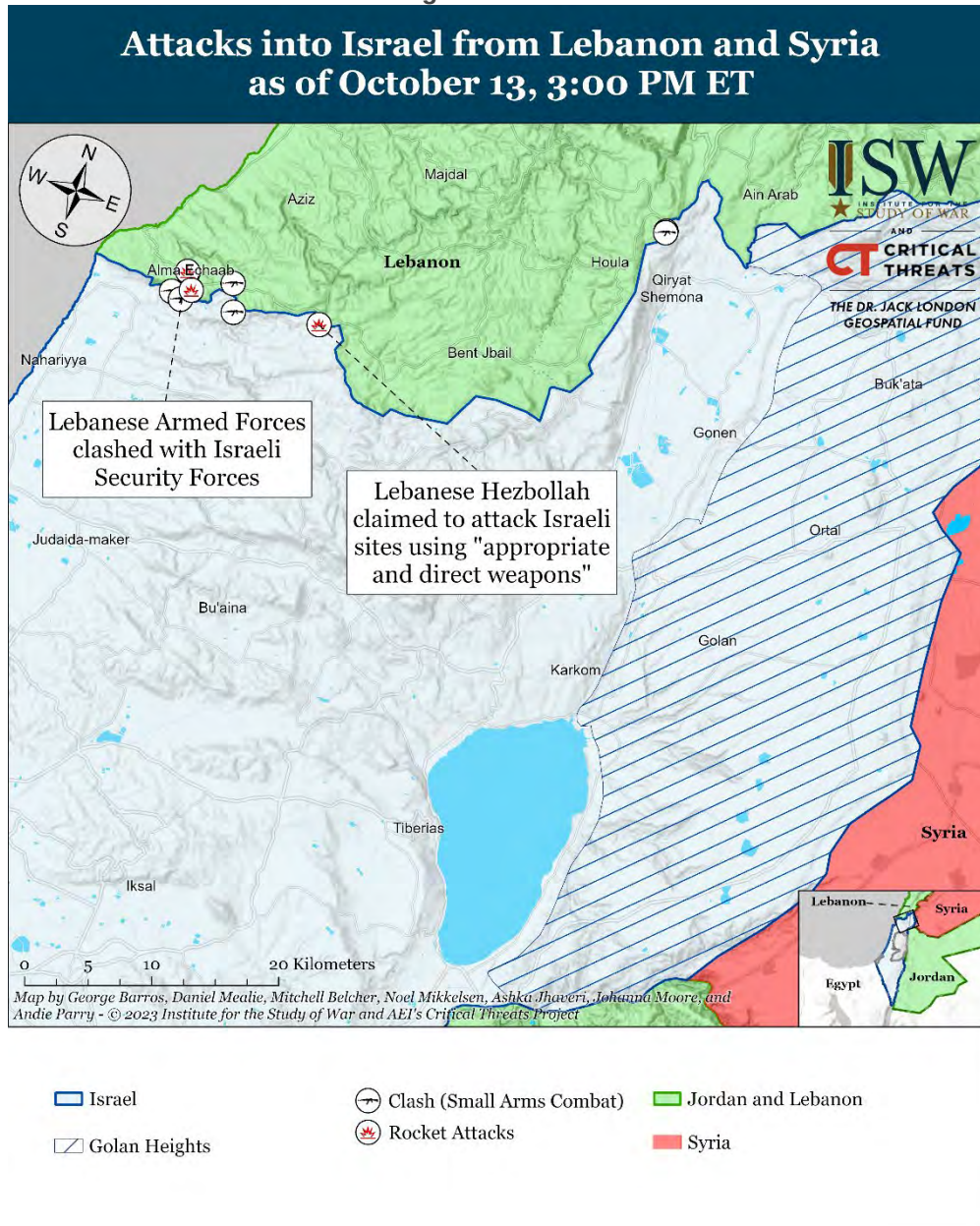
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and marches in the West Bank.

Palestinian militants clashed with Israeli security forces across the West Bank at a higher rate on October 13, which is consistent with Hamas' call for escalation. CTP-ISW recorded 32 instances of small armed combat between locals and Israeli security forces or Israeli settlers on October 13. A US-based research analyst similarly noted an increase in violence in the West Bank.[14] Hamas released a statement on October 12 celebrating clashes with Israeli security forces in the West Bank and called for continuation and further escalation.[15] PIJ released a statement announcing the launch of a campaign to conduct widespread attacks in Jenin, a Palestinian militant stronghold in the northern West Bank.[16] PIJ has established several subunits, which operate in Tubas, Jenin, Naplous, and Tulkarm.[17]

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Jordan on October 13.[18] Abbas called for an end to Israeli aggression and stated that the displacement of people from Gaza would constitute a "second catastrophe for our people" in the meeting.[19] Lebanese

Hezbollah-affiliated *Al Mayadeen* framed the meeting as “tense” and cited Palestinian leadership, who claimed Abbas told Blinken that the Israeli displacement in Gaza is a prelude to plans to displace residents in the West Bank.[20] ISW cannot corroborate the report. The report is consistent with Hamas’ stated objective for the Al Aqsa Flood operation to extend to the West Bank.[21]

South Lebanon and the Golan Heights



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

Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) claimed to attack four Israeli positions in northern Israel on October 13. LH said the attacks were in response to Israeli attacks on several southern Lebanese towns. The IDF responded by striking LH-affiliated targets with a drone.[22] CTP-ISW recorded two reports of unspecified militants approaching the border and clashing with Israeli security forces.[23] A correspondent for *Al Jazeera* noted that the IDF shelling is more extensive than previous days and that Palestinian groups are believed to be behind the infiltration attempts.[24] The Lebanese Army also engaged in small arms combat and artillery fire with Israeli security forces along the Israel-Lebanon border. This level of attacks is a slight uptick from the previous days’ levels of kinetic activity around Israel’s northern border.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and LH deployed forces to the southwestern Syrian border on October 13. The IRGC transferred elements of its engineering units from Albu Kamal to the Golan Heights.[25] LH redeployed militants from Mayadin to Damascus, which is part of its effort to redeploy all members from the Syrian provinces to Quneitra and Damascus, according to a locally based opposition outlet.[26] The Iranian- and LH-directed deployments are consistent with the scenario in which the current conflict in Israel expands into a multi-front war surrounding Israel.

Iran and the Axis of Resistance

The Iranian regime is messaging that US and Israeli actions could expand the war beyond Israel and the Palestinian territories while trying to intensify violence against Israel in the West Bank. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian repeatedly emphasized that a continuation of the Israeli “war crimes” against Palestinians could expand the conflict to the region during several meetings with Lebanese and Lebanese Hezbollah officials on October 13.[27] He similarly argued that the expansion of the conflict to other fronts would depend on Israeli actions during his meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al Sudani in Baghdad on October 12.[28] Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and other regime officials emphasized that Iran had no role in the October 7 Hamas attack.[29]

- Abdollahian criticized the United States for supporting Israel to “kill Palestinians on the one hand” while calling for others to “exercise self-restraint on the other hand” during a press conference in Beirut on October 13.[30] Abdollahian warned that “any possibility is conceivable” were this situation to continue.[31] Abdollahian also stated that the United States must control Israel in order to avoid the outbreak of regional war during his meeting with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati in Beirut on October 13.[32]
- IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami emphasized the American role in “managing” Israeli operations against Gaza during his Friday prayer sermon in Tehran on October 13.[33] Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi similarly pointed to the American “complicity” in Israeli actions during a trip to Fars Province on October 13.[34]
- Iranian Intelligence and Security Minister Esmail Khatib and Interim Tehran Friday Prayer Leader Ahmad Khatami called for the “Palestinian resistance” to deliver greater responses to Israeli aggression on October 13.[35] IRGC-affiliated *Tasnim News Agency* recirculated calls from PIJ to expand the conflict beyond Gaza and “intensify” the resistance in the West Bank against Israeli “invaders” on October 12.[36]

[1] <https://t.me/Tura313/45466>

[2] <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/10/07/world/middleeast/israel-g...>

[3] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28510>

[4] <https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1712755037259071505>

[5] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28513>; <https://x.com/BarakRavid/status/1712809184129843486?s=20>; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/05/13/faq-hamas-missiles/>

[6] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28506>; <https://almayadeen dot net/news/politics/-مطار-بن-المقاومة-ال فلسطينية-تقصف>; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28506>; غوريون-والمستوطنات-وقتل-ال

[7] https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/34906; <https://almayadeen dot net/news/politics/-مطار-بن-المقاومة-ال فلسطينية-تقصف>; غوريون-والمستوطنات-وقتل-ال

[8] <https://telegram.me/s/hamasps>; <https://t.me/Tura313/45466>; <https://www.aljazeera dot com/news/liveblog/2023/10/8/israel-palestine-escalation-live-israeli-forces-bombard-gaza#:~:text=8%20Oct%202023%20Israel%20declares%20%E2%80%9Cstate%20of%20war%E2%80%9D,Israel%20says%20it%20has%20responded%20with%20artillery%20strikes.>

[9] <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-military-tells-united-nations-over-o...>

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[11] <https://telegram.me/s/hamasps>

[12] <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/4253185-israel-hamas-blinken...>

[13] <https://apnews.com/live/israel-hamas-war-live-updates#0000018b-2774-d853...>

[14] <https://twitter.com/JoeTruzman/status/1712824849360646572>

[15] <https://hamas.ps/ar/p/18266>

[16] <https://t.me/almanarnews/130370>

- [17] <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2022/07/palestinian-islamic-jiha...>
- [18] <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-meeting-with-palestinian-author...>
- [19] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/10/13/israel-gaza-war-updates-...>
- [20] <http://almayadeen.net/news/politics/> مشد-كان-الأردن-في-بولينكن-عباس-لقاء-للميادين-الله-رام-مصادر
- [21] <https://www.israelhayom.com/2022/10/16/minor-incidents-could-spark-widespread-unrest-defense-official-warns/>
- [22] <https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1712872276633239984>
- [23] <https://twitter.com/ZeinakhodrAljaz/status/1712833987108835680>
- [24] <https://twitter.com/ZeinakhodrAljaz/status/1712851397593457045>
- [25] <https://deirezzor24.net/%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%82%D9%84-%D8%A3%D9%81/>
- [26] <https://eyeofeufrates.com/index.php/ar/news/2023/10/12/9893>
- [27] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/21/2970908> ; <https://mfa.ir/portal/newsview/731386> ; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/21/2970897> ; <https://almanar.lb/11045586> ; <https://mfa.ir/portal/newsview/731396> ; <https://www.iribnews.ir/fa/news/4014094> ; <https://www.irna.ir/news/85256843>
- [28] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2023/10/13/2970847> ; <https://nournews.ir/Fa/News/152943>
- [29] <https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/26703>
- [30] <https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/26703>
- [31] <https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/26703>
- [32] <https://mfa.ir/portal/newsview/731386>
- [33] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/21/2970927> ; <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/622823> ; <https://www.irna.ir/news/85256960>
- [34] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/21/2970928> ; <https://president.ir/fa/147151> ; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2023/10/13/2970982>
- [35] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/20/2970814> ; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/21/2970957>
- [36] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/20/2970393>

IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 14, 2023

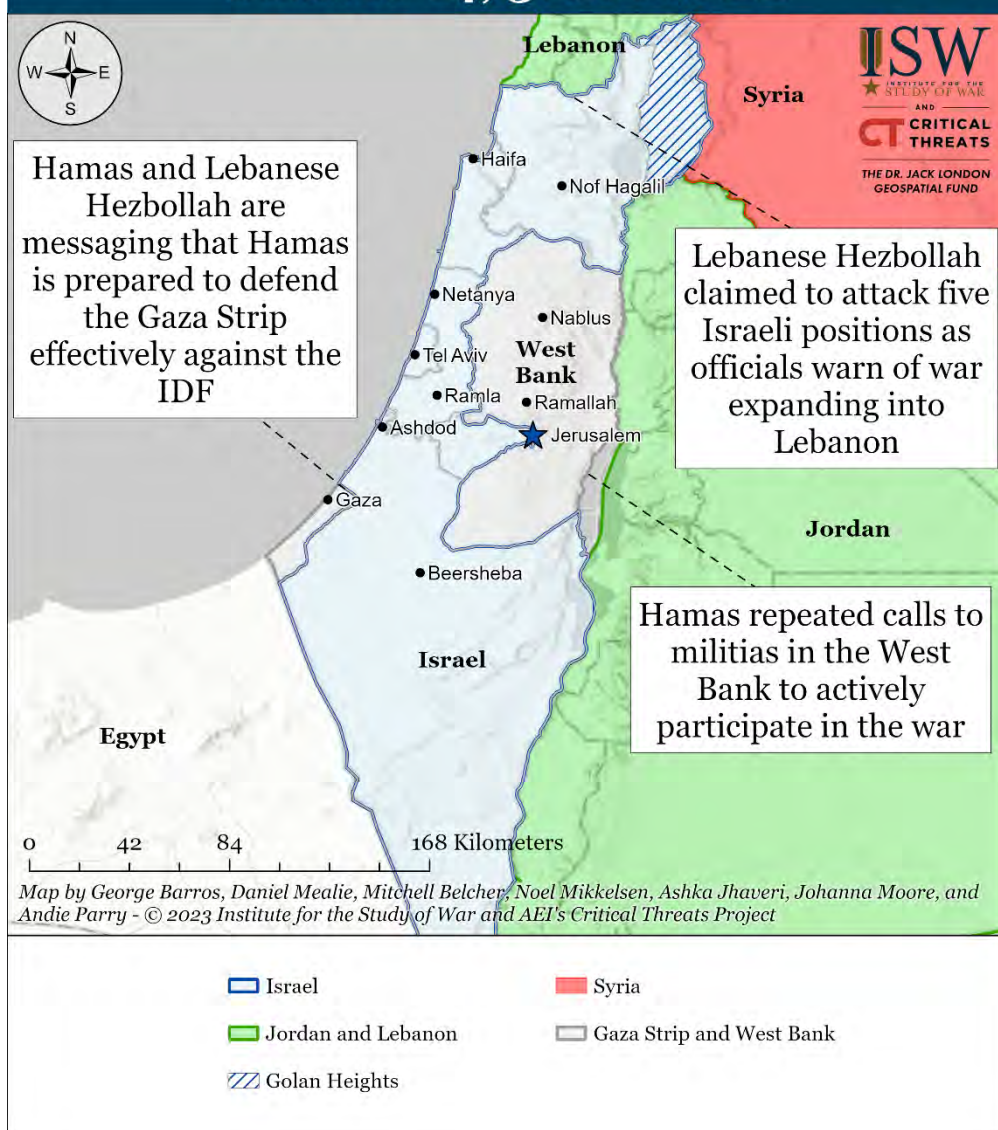
Iran Update, October 14, 2023

Ashka Jhaveri, Annika Ganzeveld, and Nicholas Carl

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.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 14, 3:00 PM ET

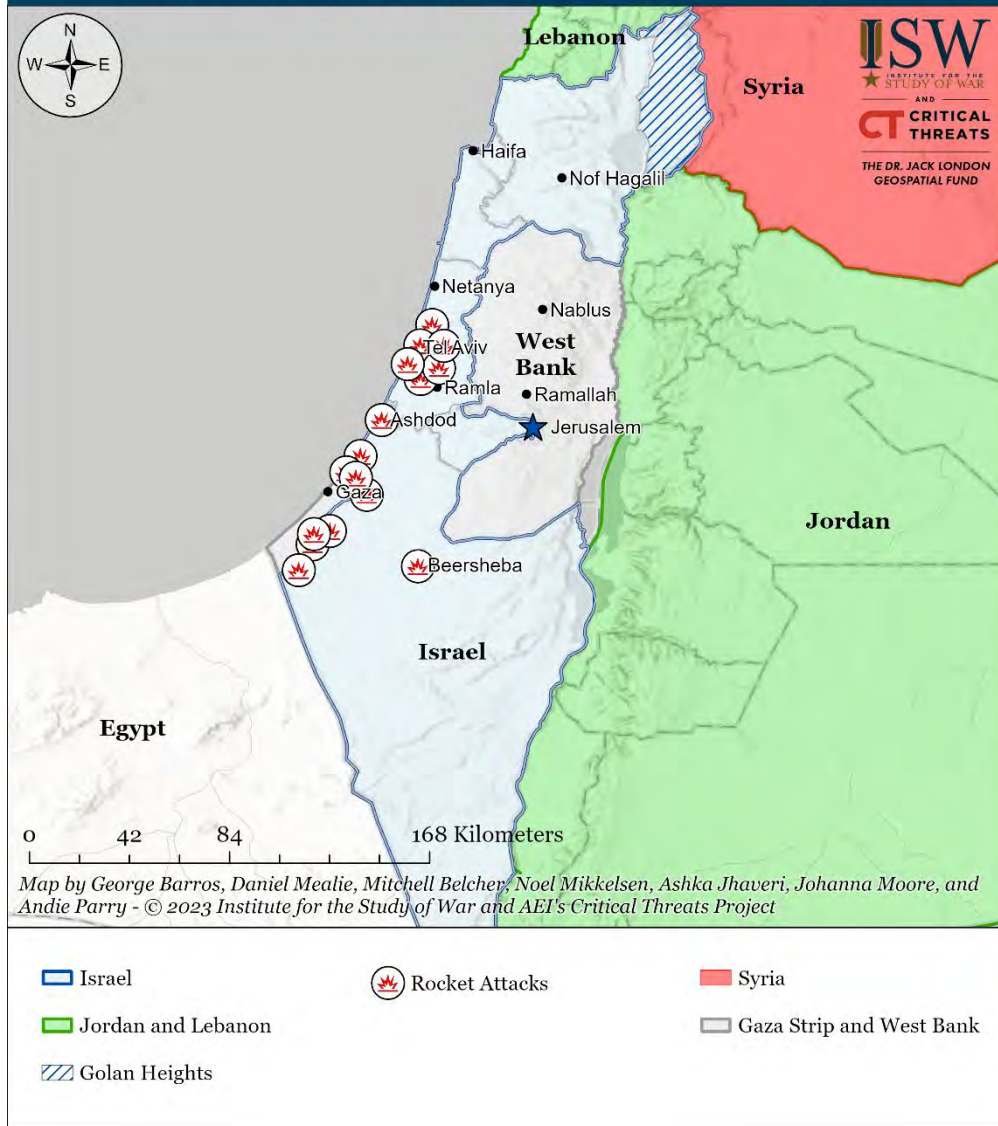


Key Takeaways:

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

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 14, 3:00 PM ET

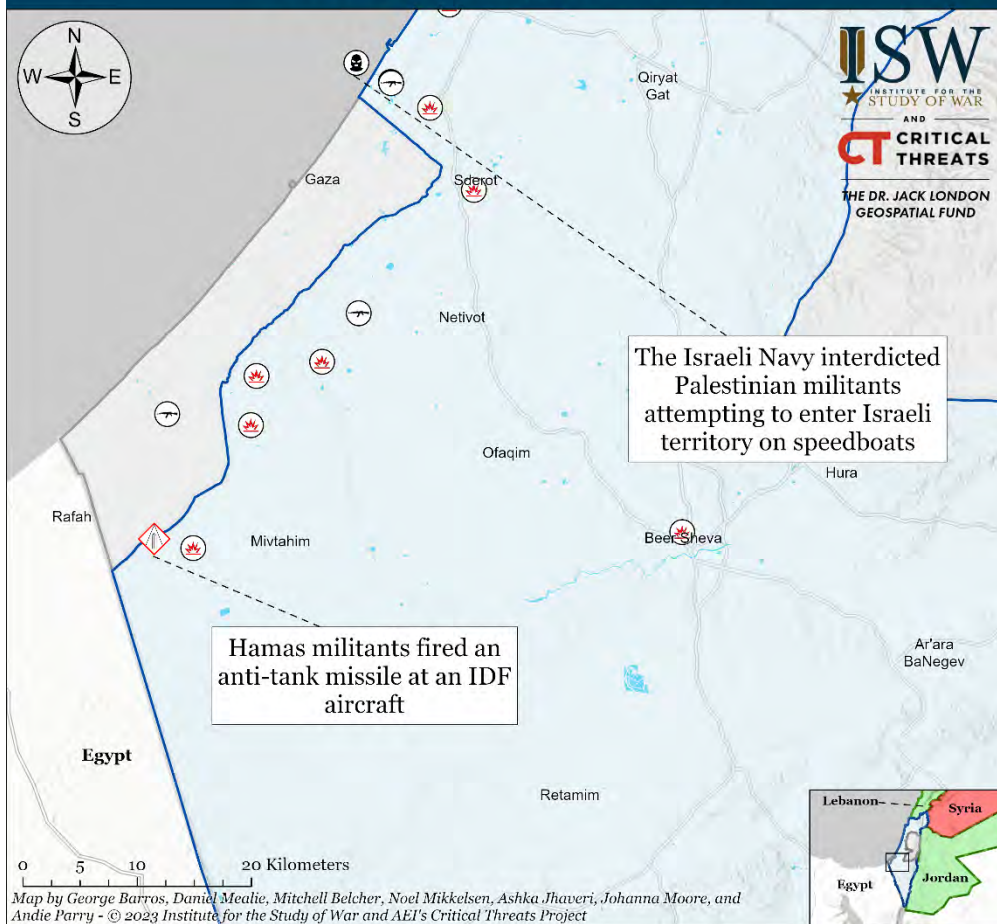


Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

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]

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 14, 3:00 PM ET



Israel	Clash (Small Arms Combat)	Gaza Strip and West Bank
Jordan and Lebanon	Rocket Attacks	Syria
	Infiltration	
	Anti-Tank Fire	

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

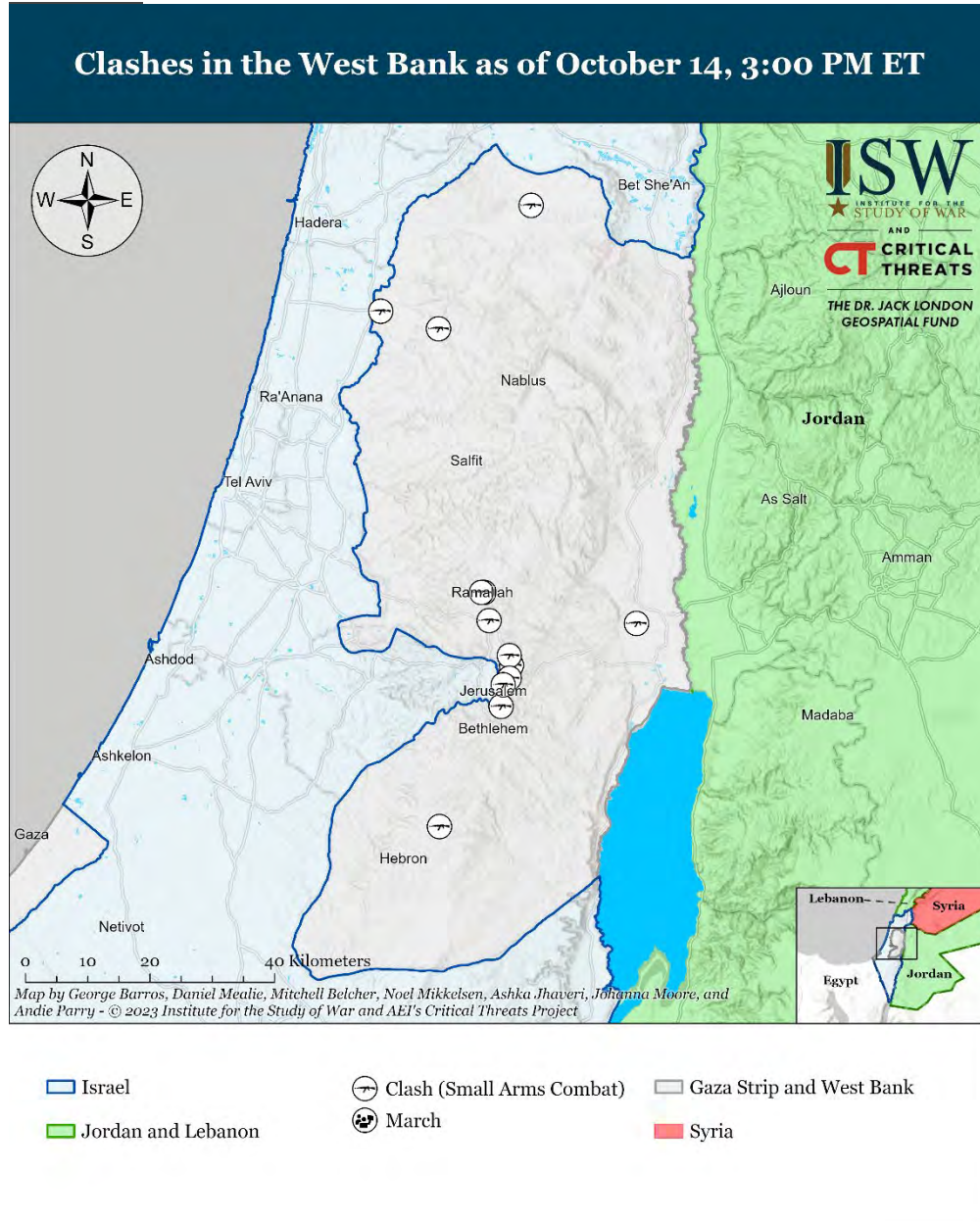
Hamas and Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) are messaging that Hamas is prepared to defend the Gaza Strip effectively against the IDF. Hamas published messages on October 14 boasting about its anti-armor capabilities and defensive preparations.[7] LH-affiliated *al Mayadeen* similarly published remarks from an 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

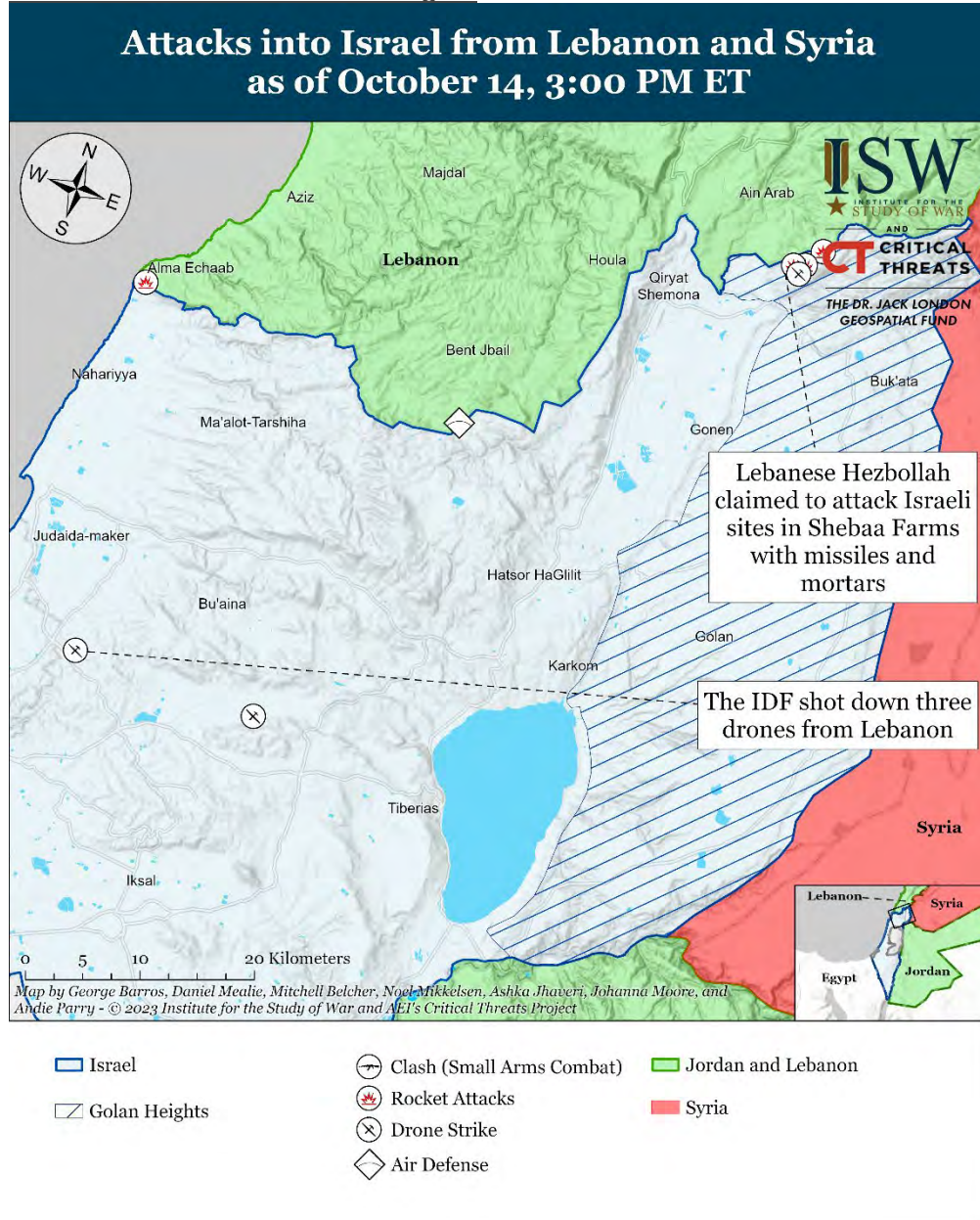


Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

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 attacks; 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 have conducted 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.

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir 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> ; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/35109 ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1713136419995021812>

[5] <https://twitter.com/JoeTruzman/status/1713190407482536369>

[6] <https://www.businessinsider.com/video-israeli-navy-blasted-hamas-fighter...>

[7] <https://t.me/hamasps/16725> ; <https://t.me/hamasps/16727>

[8] <http://almayadeen.net/news/politics/اسر-عمق-إلى-المقاومة-صواريخ-الثاني-اسبو-عها-تدخل-الأقصى-طوفان>

[9] <https://nypost.com/2021/05/14/israel-pounds-gaza-in-effort-to-destroy-va...>

[10] <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/gazas-urban-warfare-...>

[11] https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/pdf/PDF1/hamas_080408_5017868...

[12] <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20171123123237/http://w...>

- [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/الإسلامية-المقاومة-تستهدف-لبنان-في-مزارع-في-للاحتلال-مواقع-تستهدف-لبنان-في-الإسلامية-المقاومة>
- [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-d...>
- [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=XWt9fOAD7...>
- [30] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-13-2023>
- [31] <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/us/who-is-ismail...>
- [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-q...>

IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 15, 2023

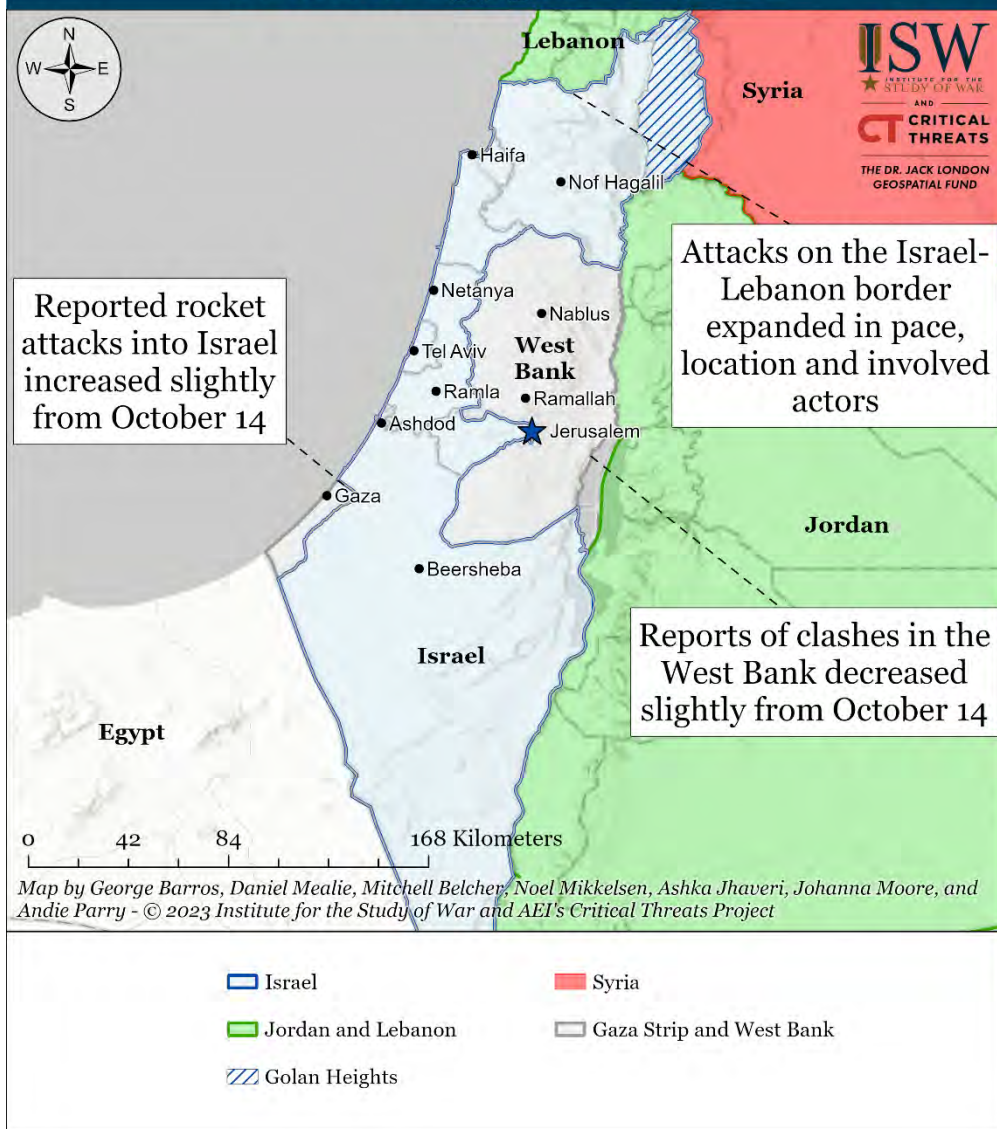
Iran Update, October 15, 2023

Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, and Nicholas Carl

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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.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 15, 3:00 PM ET

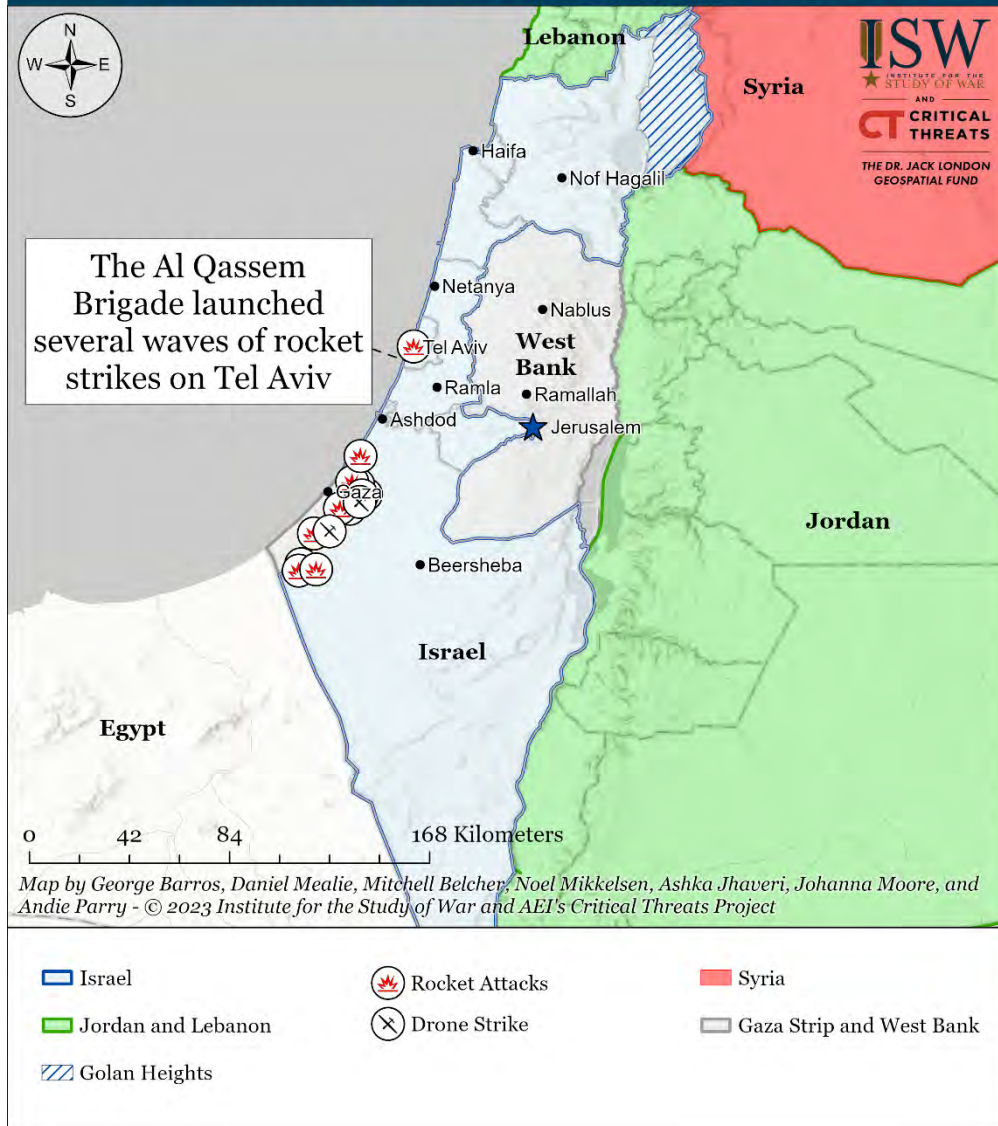


Key Takeaways:

1. Palestinian militias continued drone and indirect fire attacks into Israel, primarily southern Israel. CTP-ISW did not record any reports of infiltrations or small arms clashes in southern Israel.
2. The rate of small arms clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants has continued to fall after peaking on October 13.
3. LH expanded its campaign against Israeli forces along the Israel-Lebanon border in terms of pace, location, and actors involved. The IDF spokesperson stated that Iran has instructed LH to escalate against Israel and thereby impose pressure on the IDF while it prepares for ground operations into the Gaza Strip.
4. The IDF conducted an airstrike on the Aleppo International Airport, marking the second time that the IDF has struck this location since the war began on October 7.
5. 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.
6. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abdollahian met with senior Hamas and Qatari officials during an official visit to Doha.

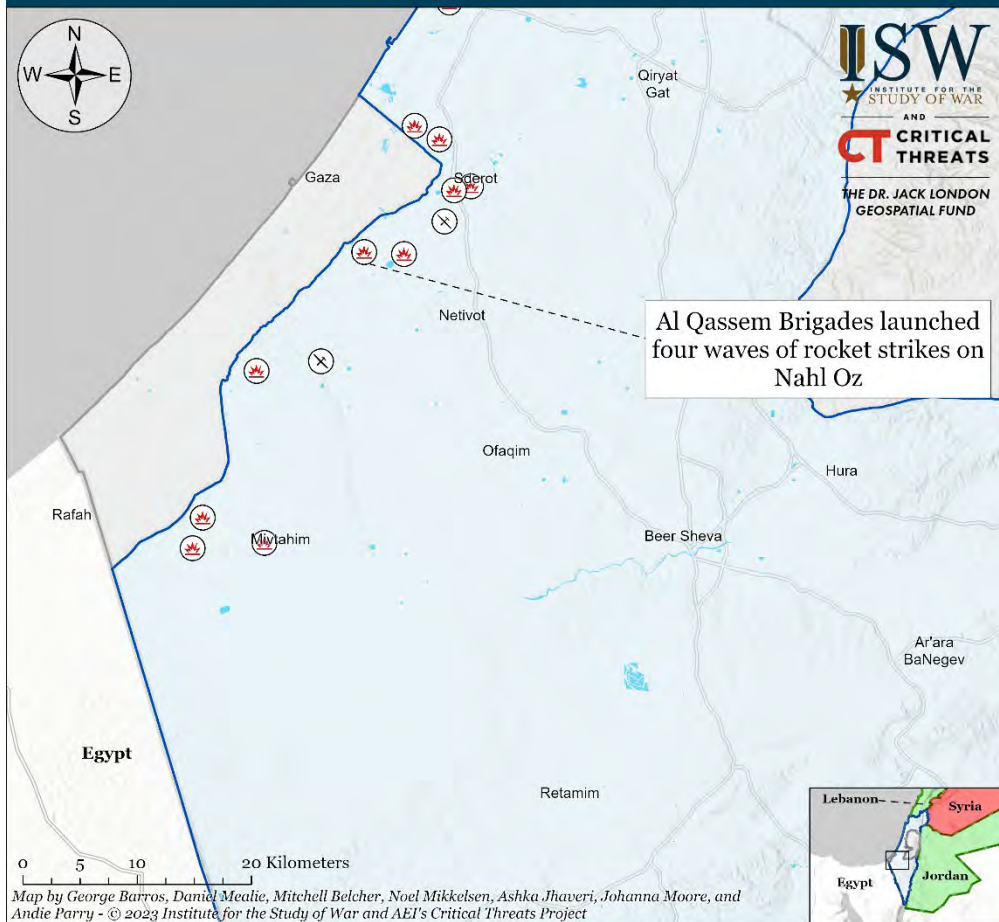
Gaza Strip

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 15, 3:00 PM ET



Palestinian militias continued drone and indirect fire attacks into Israel, primarily southern Israel, on October 15. The al Qassem Brigades— Hamas' militant wing—claimed responsibility for two one-way drone attacks and 12 mortar and rocket attacks.[1] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for another 12 mortar and rocket attacks.[2] The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine militia claimed that it conducted two mortar attacks.[3] CTP-ISW recorded reports of five unclaimed mortar and rocket strikes as well.[4] This rate of fire is consistent with CTP-ISW's previous reporting that Hamas has reduced the frequency of its attacks to conserve its munitions stockpile and prepare for a prolonged war.[5] CTP-ISW did not record any reports of infiltrations or small arms clashes in southern Israel on October 15.

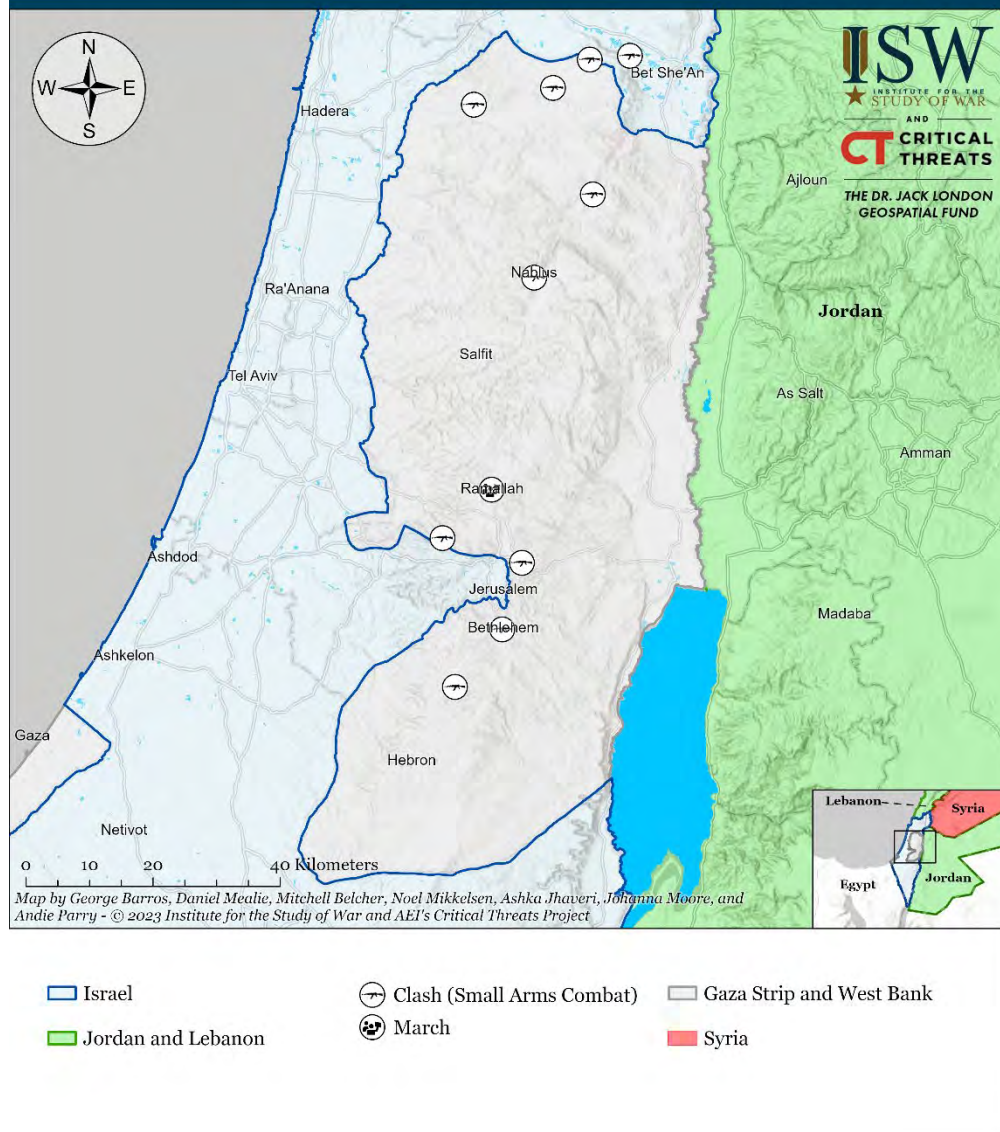
Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 15, 3:00 PM ET



- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Israel | Rocket Attacks | Gaza Strip and West Bank |
| Jordan and Lebanon | Drone Strike | Syria |

West Bank

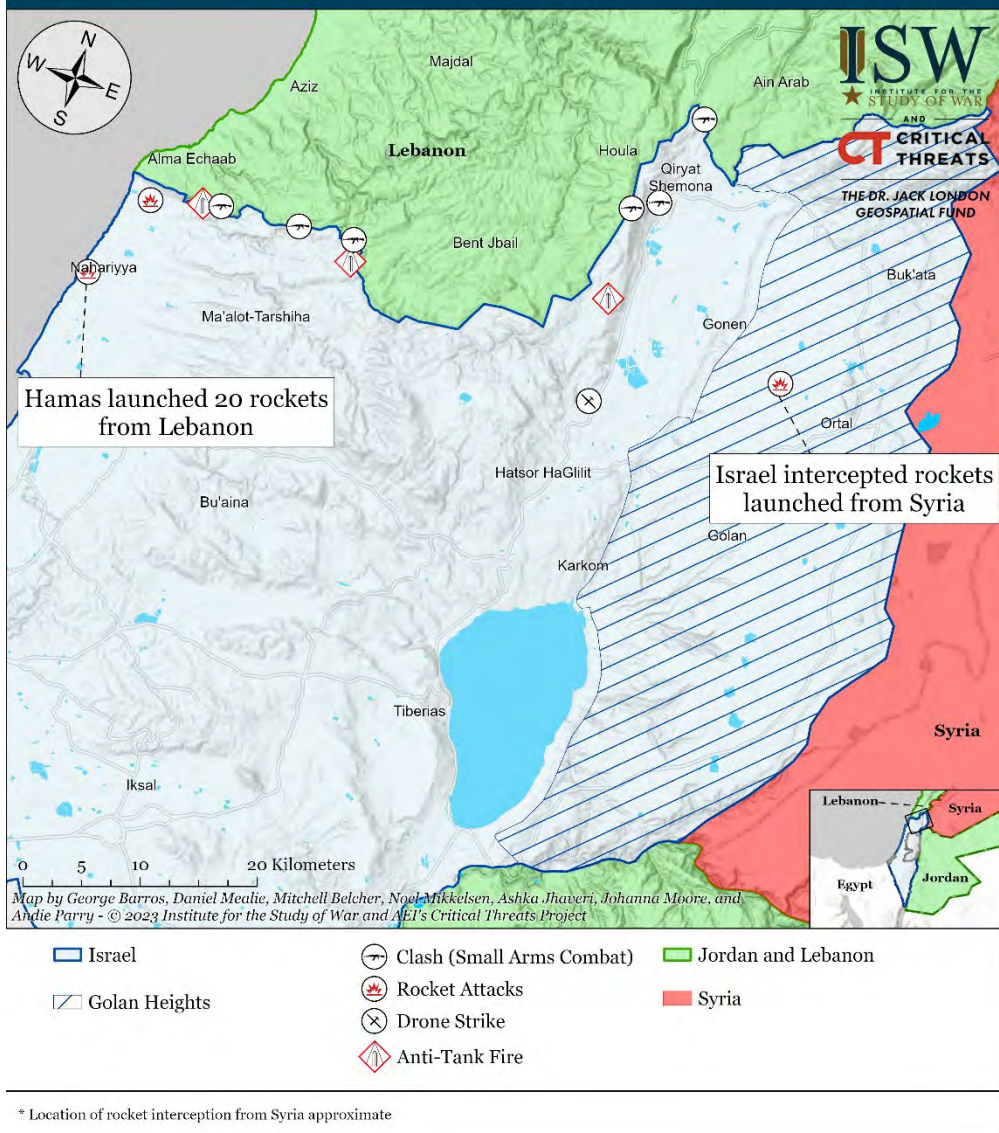
Clashes in the West Bank as of October 15, 3:00 PM ET



The rate of small arms clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants has continued to fall after peaking on October 13. CTP-ISW recorded eight clashes on October 15 and 13 clashes 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 declining violence.[6] Hamas remains committed to expanding the war to the West Bank, however.[7] Fatah—the dominant Palestinian political party in the West Bank—organized a march in Ramallah on October 15 to denounce IDF attacks into the Gaza Strip.[8] CTP-ISW has recorded five instances of clashes and four instances of marches in Ramallah since October 7.[9]

South Lebanon and Golan Heights

Attacks into Northern Israel Expanded as of October 15. 3:00 PM ET



LH expanded its campaign against Israeli forces along the Israel-Lebanon border in terms of pace, location, and actors involved on October 15. The IDF spokesperson stated that Iran has instructed LH to escalate against Israel and thereby impose pressure on the IDF while it prepares for ground operations into the Gaza Strip.^[10]

- LH engaged in small arms clashes with Israeli forces in five border towns and military posts.^[11] LH also fired anti-tank missiles at Israeli targets in at least five instances.^[12] LH claimed responsibility for these attacks for the third consecutive day. This activity marks a slight uptick in the rate of attacks compared to previous days and an expansion of attacks westward along the Israel-Lebanon border. Most LH attacks on Israeli targets have occurred around Shebaa Farms since the war began on October 7.^[13]
- Hamas's al Qassem Brigades claimed to launch 20 rockets into northern Israel on October 15.^[14] LH probably approved the attack in advanced given the extent to which LH controls southern Lebanon and coordinated with other Iranian-backed groups there. The al Qassem Brigades furthermore released a statement on October 15 claiming that its militants infiltrated northern Israel and clashed with Israeli forces.^[15]

[2] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16330>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16330>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16330>; <https://t.me/saraya/16330>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16329>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16329>; <https://saraya.ps/post/67359>; <https://t.me/Tura313/45663>; https://twitter.com/no_itsmyturn/status/1713458116690403772; <https://t.me/sarayap/s/16333>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16334>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16334>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16335>;

[3] <https://t.me/almanarnews/130744> ; <https://t.me/almanarnews/130744>
[4] <https://t.me/almanarnews/130744> ; <https://t.me/almanarnews/130744> ; https://twitter.com/no_itsmyturn/status/1713458116690403772 ; <https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1713585557392035855> ; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/35310 ;
[5] https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-slow-rate-of-rocket-fire-suggests-hamas-readying-for-long-war
[6] <https://t.me/almanarnews/130736> ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1713477829193609566>
[7] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-july-14-2023>
[8] <https://wafa.ps/Pages/Details/91708>
[9] <https://t.me/Tura313/45309> ; <https://t.me/Tura313/45309> ; <https://t.me/QudsN/310645> ; <https://t.me/Tura313/45403> ; <https://t.me/almanarnews/130280> ; https://twitter.com/AlArabiya_Brk/status/1712783589245366642 ;
[10] <https://x.com/nadavpollak/status/1713608988804157912?s=46&t=TMbDQrRFur-H...>
[11] <https://central-media.org/36324/600/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88...> ; <https://central-media.org/36331/600/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88...> ; <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1713564910624411848> ;
[12] <https://t.me/Tura313/45664> ; <https://central-media.org/36330/600/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88...> ; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/35227 ; <https://central-media.org/36323/600/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88...> ; <https://central-media.org/36325/600/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88...>
[13] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-strikes-lebanon-after-h...>
[14] <https://www.almanar.com.lb/11061767>
[15] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28549>
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[21] <https://www.axios.com/2023/10/14/iran-warning-israel-hezbollah-hamas-war...>
[22] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-14-2023>
[23] <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/node/7305315>
[24] https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-14-2023#_ed...
[25] <https://t.me/Alwalaaee/538>
[26] <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/israel-hamas-war-gaza-conflict/card/ira...> ; https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-14-2023#_ed...
[27] <https://twitter.com/Now14Israel/status/1713545940353601819>
[28] https://twitter.com/Mostafa_Najafii/status/1713509987538923983
[29] www.mfa.ir/portal/NewsView/731493
[30] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-12-2023>
[31] www.mfa.ir/portal/NewsView/731528 ; www.mfa.ir/portal/NewsView/731492
[32] <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-signals-iran-wont-access-its-6-bln-q...>

IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 16, 2023

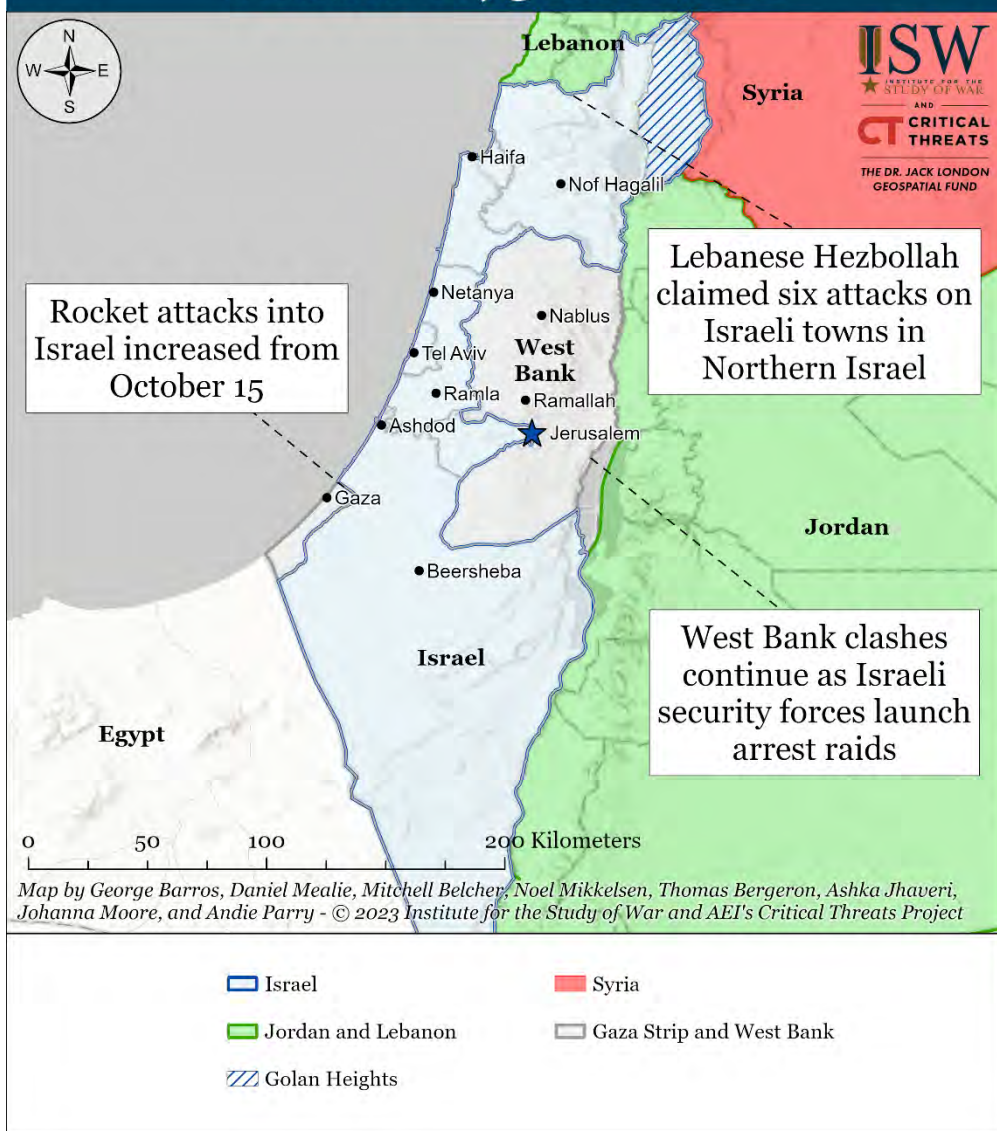
Iran Update, October 16, 2023

Johanna Moore, Ashka Jhaveri, Annika Ganzeveld, Andie Parry, and Nicholas Carl

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.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 16, 3:00 PM ET

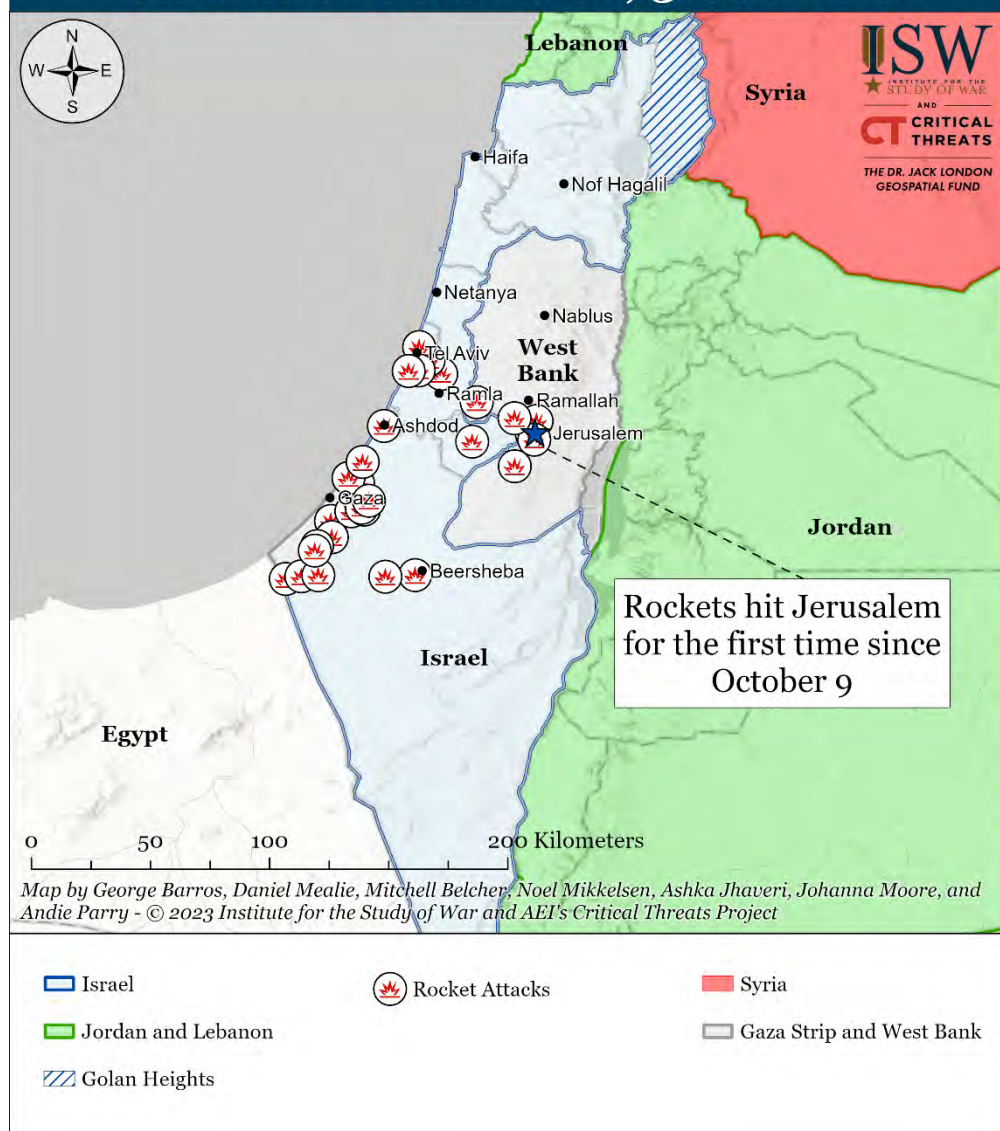


Key Takeaways:

1. Palestinian militias continued drone and indirect fire attacks into Israel, primarily southern Israel, on October 16. The rate of small arms clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants dropped slightly on October 16 after peaking on October 13.
2. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian warned on October 15 and 16 that a multi-front war against Israel is becoming more likely and that Iranian-backed militias may take preemptive actions against Israel in the "coming hours."
3. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is trying to improve its operational security in eastern Syria likely as part of an effort to move advanced military systems into Syria and Lebanon. 250-500 Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces arrived in Syria and Lebanon on October 16.

Gaza Strip

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 16, 3:00 PM ET

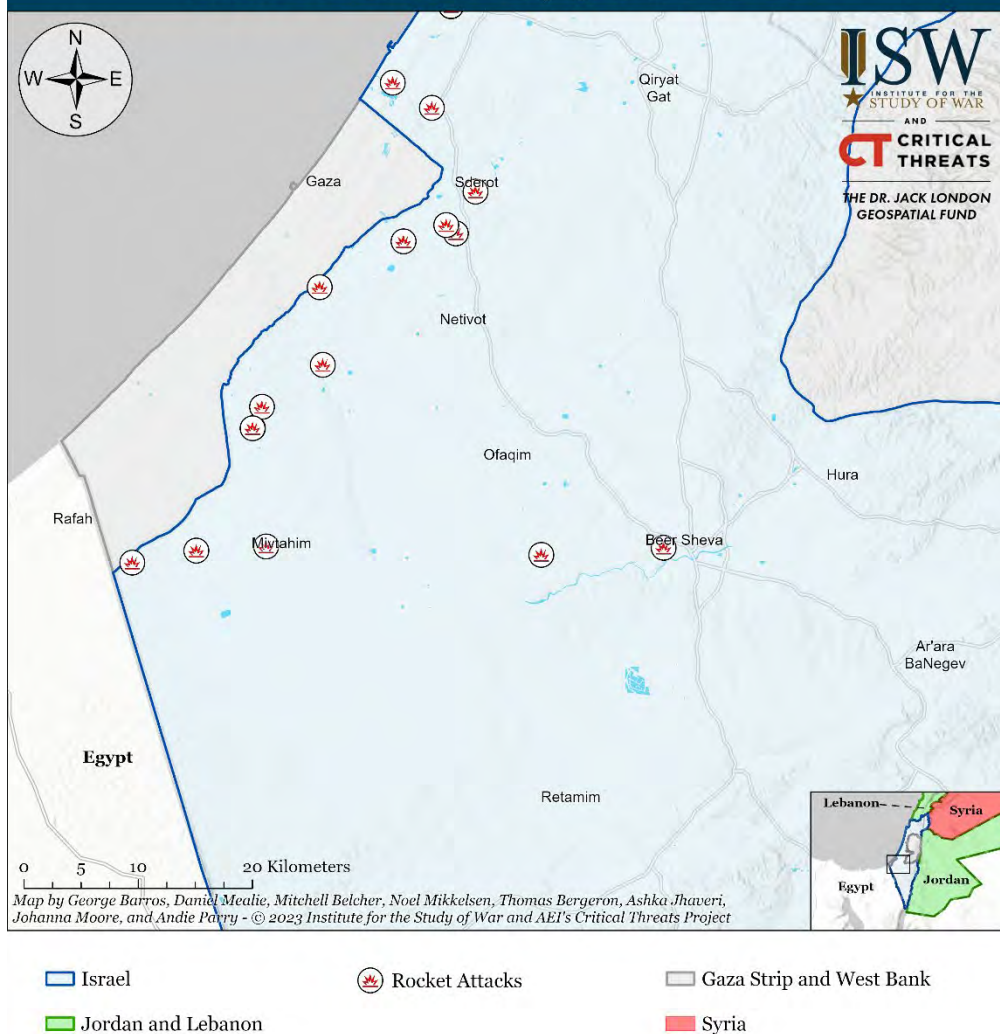


Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Palestinian militias continued indirect fire attacks into Israel, primarily southern Israel, on October 16. Hamas' militant wing, the al Qassem Brigades, claimed responsibility for 18 mortar and rocket attacks.[1] Palestinian Islamic Jihad's (PIJ) militant wing, Saraya al Quds, claimed responsibility for another six mortar and rocket attacks.[2] The militant wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the National Resistance Brigades, claimed two mortar attacks into Israel from Gaza.[3] CTP-ISW recorded 10 unclaimed mortar and rocket strikes as well.[4]

CTP-ISW did not record any reports of infiltrations or small arms clashes in southern Israel on October 16.

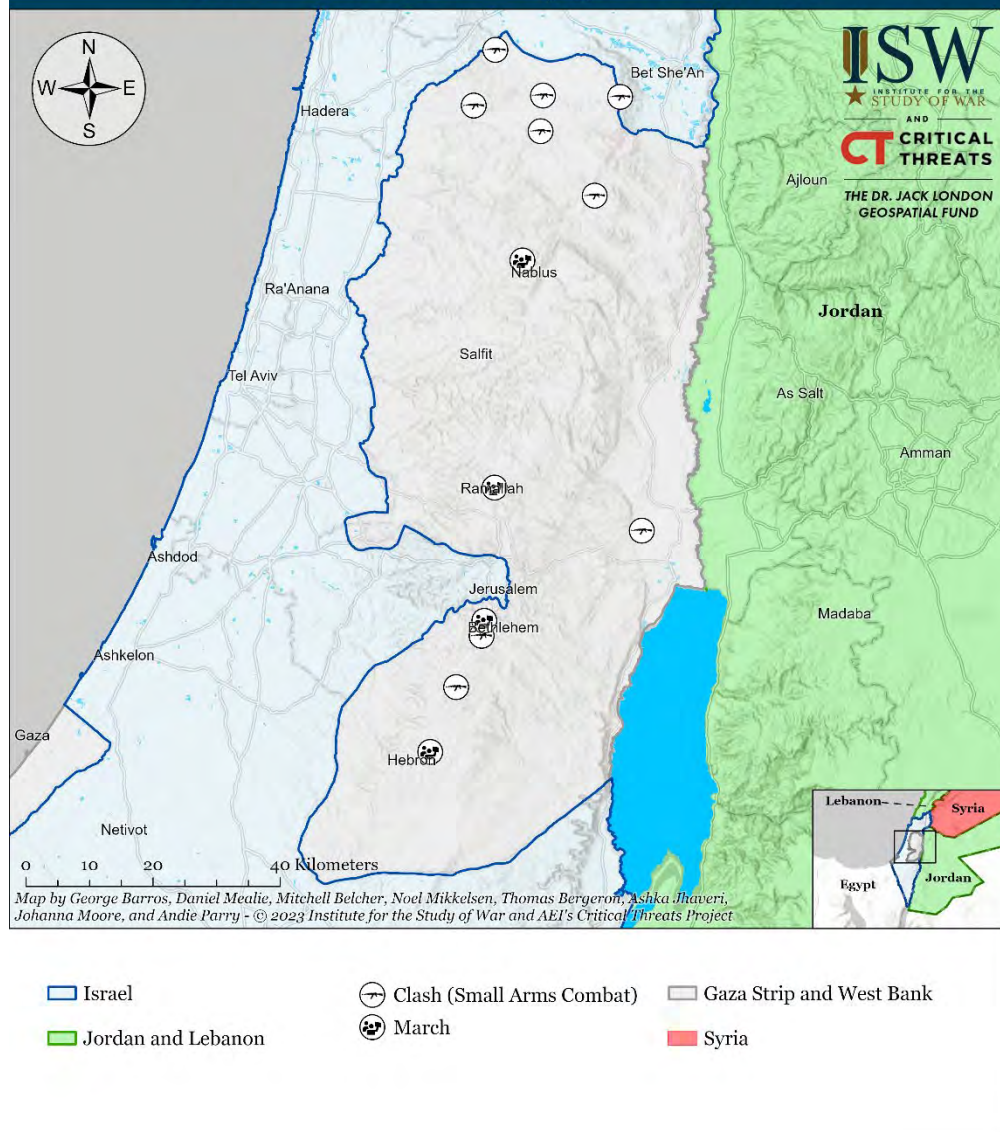
Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 16, 3:00 PM ET



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

West Bank

Clashes in the West Bank as of October 16, 3:00 PM ET

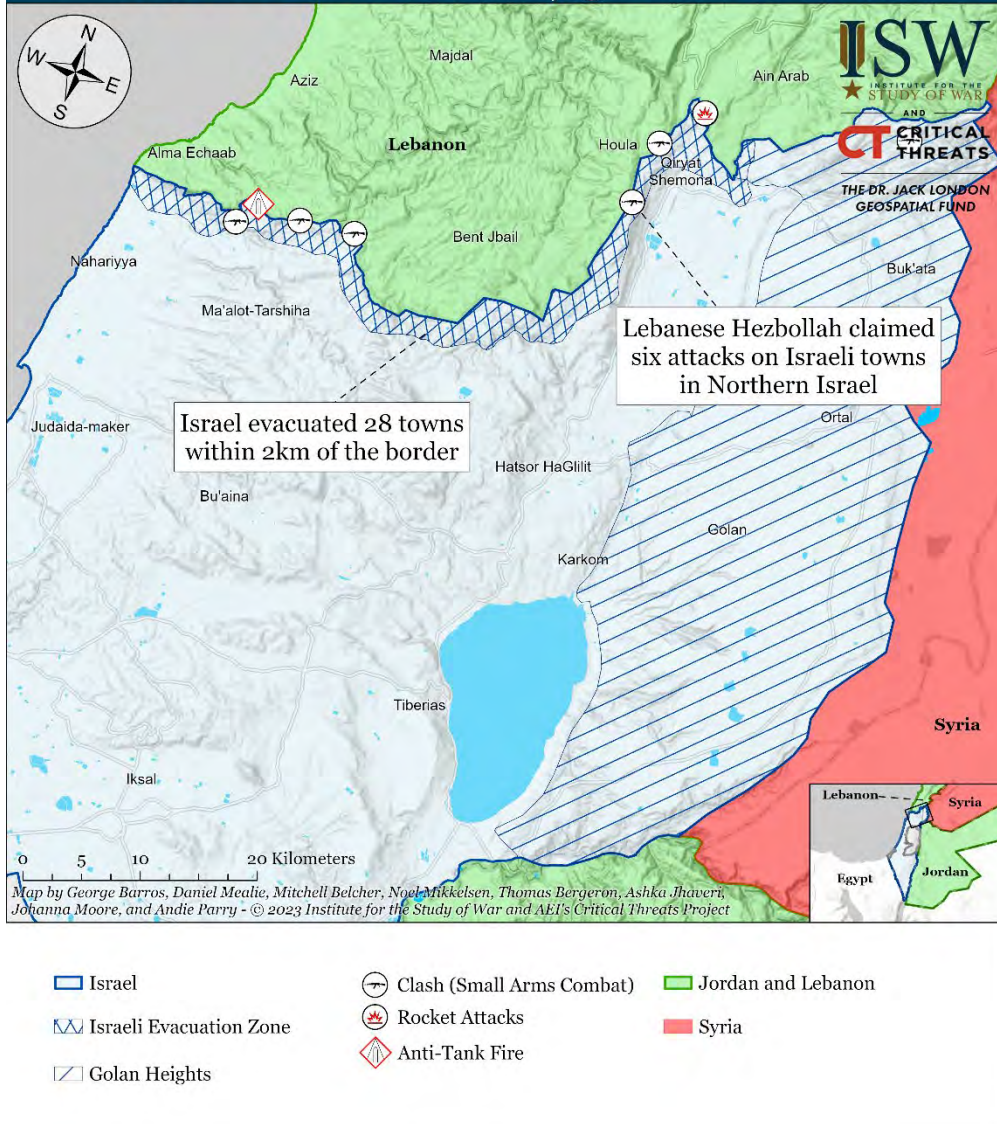


This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and marches in the West Bank.

The rate of small arms clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants dropped slightly on October 16 after peaking on October 13. CTP-ISW recorded nine clashes and four marches in the West Bank compared to 32 clashes recorded on October 13.[5] Israeli forces arrested 20 individuals affiliated with Hamas in the West Bank and seized various small arms and ammunition.[6] CTP-ISW previously suggested that arrest campaigns in the West Bank may be contributing to the declining violence.[7] Hamas remains committed to expanding the war to the West Bank, however.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Attacks into Israel from Lebanon as of October 16, 3:00 PM ET



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

Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) claimed six attacks on Israeli positions in Northern Israel on October 16 and fired an anti-tank missile at an Israeli tank.[8] CTP-ISW recorded one mortar attack into Israeli territory from Lebanon, a decrease compared to seven recorded on October 15.[9] The IDF said that there were multiple small arms clashes on Israel's northern border.[10] CTP-ISW also recorded one small arms clash between LH and Israeli security forces across Israel's northern border on October 16.[11] LH released a video on October 16 showing LH militants shooting at Israeli surveillance equipment on the Lebanese border.[12] LH members were seen shooting at Israeli Army radio towers and cameras at outposts along the Israel-Lebanon border.

Israel's National Emergency Authority (NAE), which falls under the Israeli Ministry of Defense, evacuated Israeli citizens from 28 towns on the Israel-Lebanon border to create a two-kilometer buffer zone.[13] Lebanese Hezbollah steadily increased its activity along the Israeli border between October 7 and 15.[14] CTP-ISW has also reported several unconfirmed reports of militia infiltrations into northern Israel.[15]

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian warned on October 15 and 16 that a multi-front war against Israel is becoming more likely and that Iranian-backed militias may take preemptive actions against Israel in the “coming hours.” Abdollahian stated in an interview with *Al Jazeera* on October 15 that Israel’s continued siege of Gaza is making a multi-front war “increasingly more probable.”^[16] Abdollahian similarly posted on X (Twitter) on October 16 that “the time for political solutions is coming to an end” and that the expansion of the Israel-Hamas war to new fronts is becoming “inevitable.”^[17] Abdollahian also warned on October 16 that resistance groups may take “preemptive measures” against Israel in the “coming hours.”^[18] Iranian state media recirculated Abdollahian’s warning in English, indicating that their intended audience is the United States and Israel. ^[19] CTP-ISW will continue to closely monitor the Israel-Hamas war to forecast whether a multi-front war is becoming more or less likely.

- The Iranian regime continues to signal its unwillingness to enter a direct conflict with Israel. Iran’s Mission to the United Nations emphasized that Iran will not intervene in the Israel-Hamas war if Israel refrains from attacking Iranian territory, interests, and nationals in a statement on October 15.^[20] CTP-ISW previously reported that Iran has articulated its red line for directly intervening in the Israel-Hamas war as an Israeli attack on Iran.^[21]
- Iran and elements of its Axis of Resistance are preparing for the Hamas-Israel war to expand into a regional conflict. Iranian-backed militants have deployed to southern Lebanon and southwestern Syria.^[22] These militants include Lebanese Hezbollah, Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces units, and the Afghan Fatemiyoun and Pakistani Zeynabiyoun divisions. The IDF has conducted airstrikes on Damascus and Aleppo international airports to disrupt Iranian military shipments to Syria and Lebanon. Iran would likely provide material and financial support to its proxies to fight Israel rather than get directly involved in the Israel-Hamas war were this war to expand into a regional conflict. Direct Iranian involvement would lead to escalation with Israel, which Iran seeks to avoid. Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanani warned Israel against attacking Iran on October 9, threatening a “devastating response” to any attack.^[23] Iran has historically used its proxies in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen to advance its regional objectives—such as expelling the United States from the Middle East—while retaining a degree of plausible deniability.^[24]

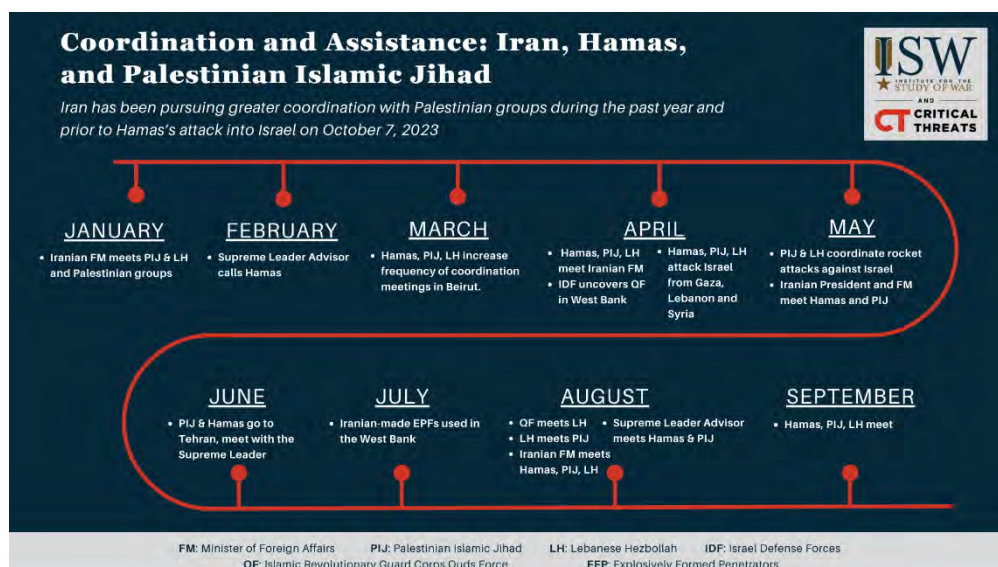
The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is trying to improve its operational security in eastern Syria likely as part of an effort to move advanced military systems into Syria and Lebanon. Iran typically takes steps to reinforce operational security along its ground lines of communication in Syria to protect military shipments from Israeli airstrikes.^[25] Israel has conducted airstrikes on the Damascus and Aleppo international airports in recent days, which Israeli media and officials have indicated is meant to disrupt the transfer of Iranian military systems to Syria and Lebanon. CTP-ISW is monitoring Iran positioning its proxies in the Levant to support the Palestinian militias fighting against Israel.

- The IRGC commander of eastern Syria prohibited cell phones at IRGC headquarters in Deir ez Zor city in one of several security measures to protect infrastructure and foreign fighters against airstrikes, according to local media.^[26] The IRGC attempted to disguise its activity in eastern Syria by providing personnel with civilian cars and rebranding facilities as Syrian Arab Army positions.^[27] CTP-ISW previously noted that the IRGC and LH deployments to Deir ez Zor indicated the militias have struggled to preserve operational security as they expand operations in Syria.^[28]
- Israel conducted multiple airstrikes on Damascus and Aleppo international airports on October 12 and 14 which disrupts critical aerial nodes through which Iran funnels military equipment and personnel into the Levant.^[29] Iran transfers weapons through these airports, as was the case in February 2023 when it sent air defense equipment to Aleppo along with earthquake relief shipments.^[30]
- A senior official at the Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry indicated that the air strikes in Syria are part of an Israeli effort to prevent Iran from moving weapons into Syria and/or opening a front against Israel from there.^[31] Israeli media reported on October 16 that Israel detects an intensive Iranian effort to transfer advanced weapons to LH in Lebanon.^[32]

An Iraqi-based open-source intelligence account claimed on October 16 that 250-500 Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces arrived in Syria and Lebanon. This is consistent with CTP-ISW’s tracking of Iranian-backed foreign fighters deploying to border areas with Israel.^[33] Iranian-backed militants have deployed to the southwestern Syrian border since the war began on October 7.^[34] These militants also include members of the Afghan Fatemiyoun Division and Pakistani Zeynabiyoun Division, according to Israeli media.^[35] IRGC Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani was in Syria coordinating some of these deployments as of October 15, according to an Iran-based journalist.^[36] LH similarly redeployed

militants from Mayadin to Damascus as part of an effort to transfer LH members throughout Syria to the southwestern border.[37]

Iran has pursued greater coordination with Palestinian groups during the past year. Iranian officials, Lebanese Hezbollah, and Palestinian militant groups held meetings, visits, and calls in the year leading up to Hamas's October 7 attack. The coordination included Iran providing explosively formed penetrators (EFPs), which militants in the West Bank used in attacks against the IDF. This is consistent with comments from the PIJ leader in Lebanon, Ihsan Ataya, who acknowledged as recently as September 28 that Iran supports PIJ with money, weapons, and "everything it needs to confront Israel." [38] The coordination also occurred after Hamas began planning its October 7 attack on Israel. The group's spokesperson claimed the group began planning its attack in 2022.[39] The graphic below demonstrates this coordination with senior Iranian political and strategic leadership, as well as Hamas and PIJ military developments.



[1] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28573> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28575> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28576> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28577> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28578> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigade/28579> ; <https://twitter.com/AuroraIntel/status/1713914310232006691> ; <https://twitter.com/AuroraIntel/status/1713914310232006691> ; <https://t.me/Tura313/45755> ; <https://t.me/QudsN/312934> ; <https://t.me/QudsN/312937> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28583> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28583> ; <https://t.me/QudsN/312951> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28584> ; <https://t.me/hamasps/16787> ; <https://t.me/hamasps/16790> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28585> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16349>

[2] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16346> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16347> ; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/35415 ; <https://t.me/AymanGouda/5748> ; <https://t.me/AymanGouda/5748> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16349>

[3] <https://t.me/QudsN/312785> ; <https://t.me/QudsN/312827>

[4] https://twitter.com/no_itsmyturn/status/1713829412515258468 ; https://twitter.com/no_itsmyturn/status/1713837764410572913 ; <https://t.me/QudsN/312940> ; <https://t.me/maymun5/53080> ; <https://twitter.com/AuroraIntel/status/1713979101445329032> ; https://twitter.com/ignis_fatum/status/1713981221082980410 ; https://twitter.com/ignis_fatum/status/1713919974635450619 ; https://twitter.com/ignis_fatum/status/1713957822520570006 ; https://twitter.com/ignis_fatum/status/1713957822520570006

[5] <https://wafa dot ps/Pages/Details/81818> ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1713826377382723796> ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1713826377382723796> ; <https://wafa dot ps/Pages/Details/81870> ; <https://wafa dot ps/Pages/Details/81868> ; <https://t.me/QudsN/312963> ; <https://t.me/QudsN/312960> ; <https://wafa dot ps/Pages/Details/81892> ; <https://wafa dot ps/Pages/Details/81897>

[6] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1713826371527401940>

[7] <https://www.understandingwar.org/background/iran-update-october-15-2023>

[8] https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/35339 ; <https://central-media dot org/36336/600/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9->

%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9- ; <https://central-media.org/36337/600/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88...>

[9] <https://twitter.com/AuroraIntel/status/1713643381312631163>

[10] <https://twitter.com/IDFSpokesperson/status/1713935025954013573?s=20>

[11] <https://x.com/IDFSpokesperson/status/1713918234280227278?s=20> ; https://twitter.com/ignis_fatum/status/1713918010610663661

[12] <https://www.dotalmanar.com.lb/11065199>

[13] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1713796865815134364> ; <https://www.dotalmanar.com.lb/11064726> ;

[14] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-15-2023>

[15] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-13-2023> ; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/35199 ; https://t.me/Hanata_Republic/2754 ; <https://twitter.com/JoeTruzman/status/1712853104268653040>

[16] <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/15/iran-warns-israel-of-regional-escalation-if-gaza-ground-offensive-launched>

[17] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/24/2972818>

[18] <https://twitter.com/abasaslani/status/1714005468761161841?s=46&t=TMbDQr...>

[19] <https://en.irna.ir/news/85260808/Iran-Preemptive-actions-by-resistance-possible-in-coming-hours>

[20] <https://www.irna.ir/news/85259533>

[21] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-11-2023>

[22] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-15-2023>

[23] <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231009-iran-lauds-hamas-attack-even-as-it-denies-involvement>

[24] <https://www.rand.org/blog/2019/05/irans-network-of-fighters-in-the-middl...>

[25] <https://www.syriahr.com/%d8%a8%d8%b9%d8%af-%d8%b3%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%aa%d8%ad%d9%82%d9%8a%d9%82%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%b1%d8%b5%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%8a-%d8%ad%d9%88%d9%84/593744/> ; <https://www.syriahr.com/%d8%a8%d9%80-%d9%80%d8%aa%d9%80-%d9%80%d9%87%d9%80-%d9%80%d9%85%d9%80-%d9%80%d8%a9-%d8%aa%d9%80-%d9%80%d8%b3%d9%80-%d9%80%d8%b1%d9%8a%d9%80-%d9%80%d8%a8-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%b9%d9%84%d9%88%d9%85/593808/> ; <https://eyeofeuphrates.com/ar/news/2023/05/16/8529>

[26] <https://deirezzor24.net/%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%84%D9%84%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%8A/>

[27] <https://deirezzor24.net/%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%B9-%D8%B3%D9%8A/> ; <https://eyeofeuphrates.com/index.php/ar/news/2023/10/15/9912>

[28] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-march-22-2023>

[29] <https://www.facebook.com/mod.gov.sy/posts/pfbid0WpU9dTfBpMVHbobWo4kwZEiV...> ; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/34798 ; <https://t.me/maymun5/52141> ; <https://twitter.com/AuroraIntel/status/1712523324922667203> ; <https://www.facebook.com/mod.gov.sy/posts/pfbid028npYUAg4kHFsU6uMkNiKXc3...>

[30] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-exploits-quake-relief-mis...>

[31] <https://twitter.com/yzarka/status/1713403385947316411>

[32] <https://twitter.com/IsraelRadar/status/1713812762676109680>

[33] https://twitter.com/Tammuz_Intel/status/1713897475554017674

[34] <https://deirezzor24.net/%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%82%D9%84-%D8%A3%D9%81/>

[35] <https://twitter.com/Now14Israel/status/1713545940353601819>

[36] https://twitter.com/Mostafa_Najafii/status/1713509987538923983

[37] <https://eyeofeuphrates.com/index.php/ar/news/2023/10/12/9893>

[38] [https://www dot almanar.com.lb/10980774](https://www.dot.almanar.com.lb/10980774)

[39] https://t.me/spokesman_2020/47

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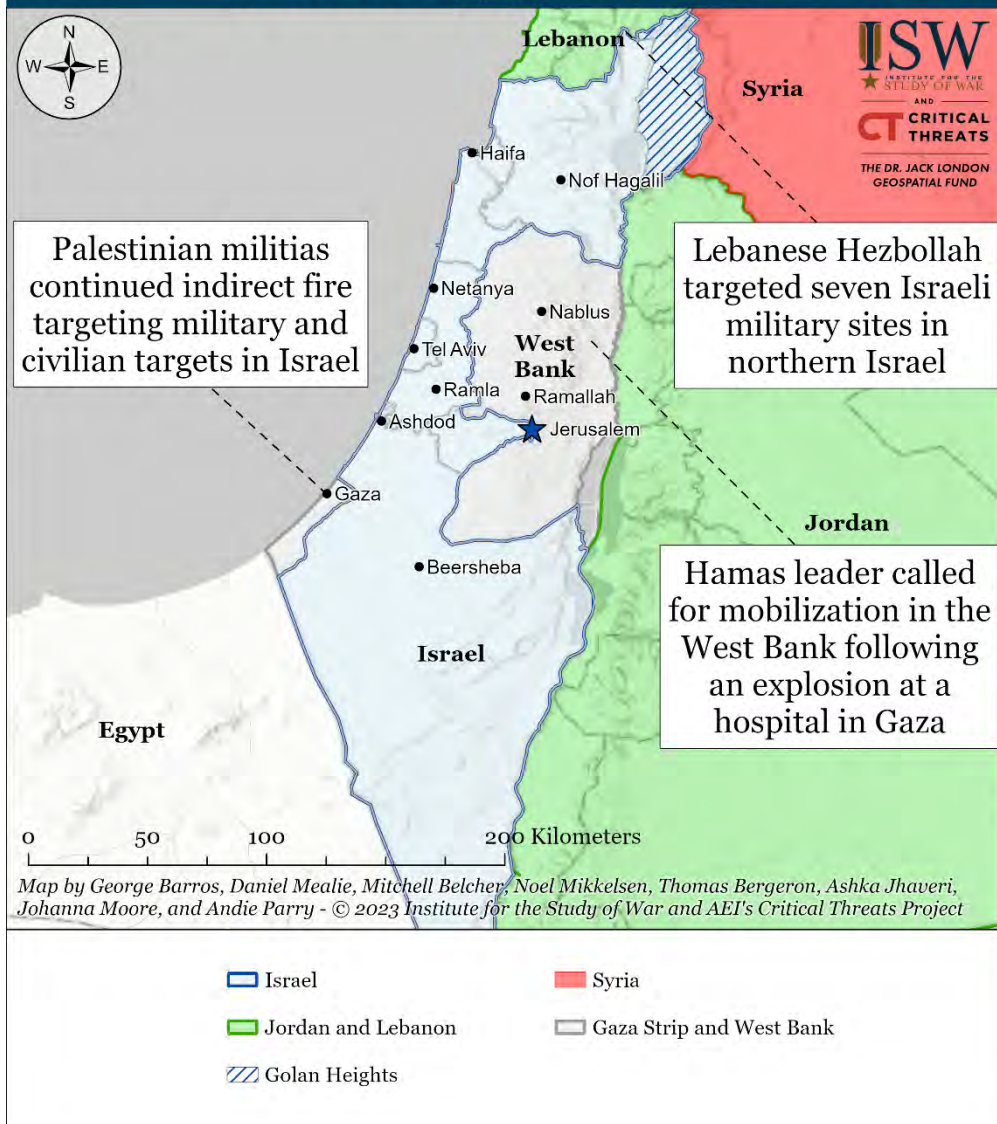
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Key Takeaways:

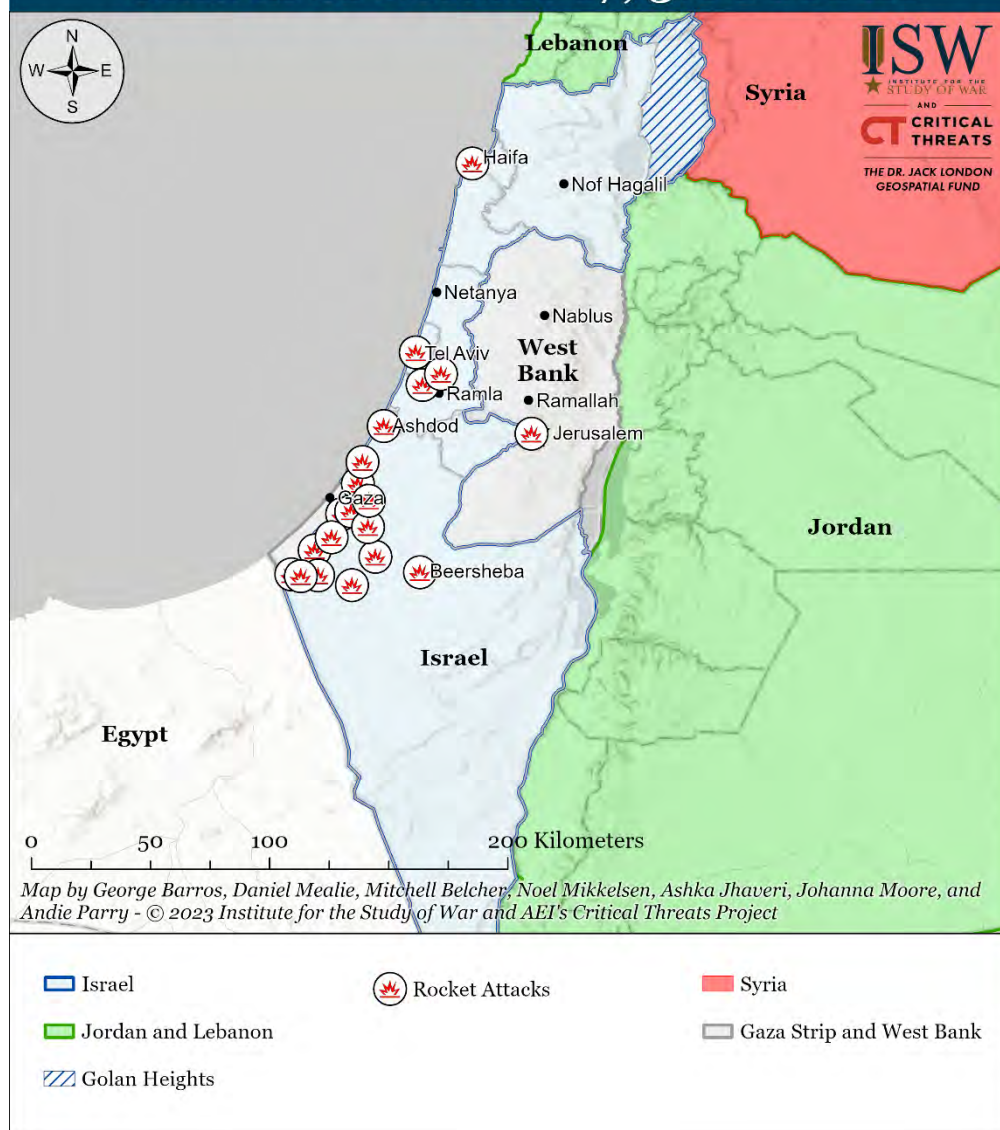
1. Palestinian militias continued indirect fire into Israel on October 17, attacking civilian and military targets.
2. The rate of small arms clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants in the West Bank remained low after peaking on October 13.
3. Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh called for mobilization in the West Bank following an explosion at a hospital in Gaza.
4. CTP-ISW recorded 10 attacks from Lebanon into Israeli territory on October 17, including seven against military targets. LH activity on Israel's northern border creates opportunities for further operations against Israel.
5. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reiterated what other senior Iranian officials are saying about the Hamas-Israel war during a speech.
6. Senior IRGC commanders are framing Hamas' al Aqsa Flood operation as a prelude to future attacks on Israel.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 17, 3:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 17, 3:00 PM ET

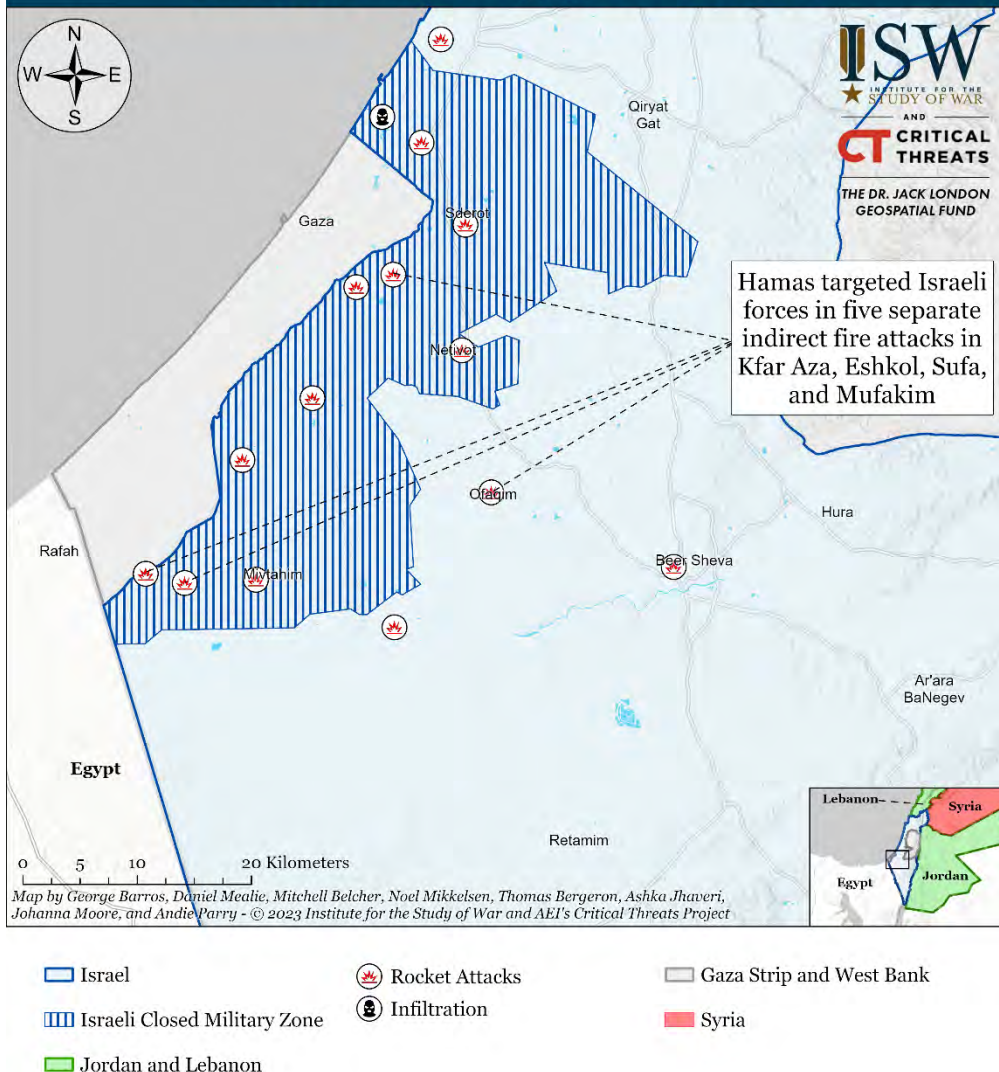


Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Palestinian militias continued indirect fire into Israel on October 17. The al Qassem Brigades— Hamas' militant wing—claimed responsibility for 26 mortar and rocket attacks.^[1] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for another five rocket attacks.^[2] The al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades—the militant wing of Fatah—claimed two mortar attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip.^[3] CTP-ISW recorded reports of five unclaimed mortar and rocket strikes as well. This rate of attacks is consistent with the rate that CTP-ISW observed on October 16.

CTP-ISW recorded one report of an infiltration from the Gaza Strip near Zikim on October 17.^[4] An IDF helicopter killed two individuals on the beach.^[5] CTP-ISW cannot independently confirm this report.

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 17, 3:00 PM ET



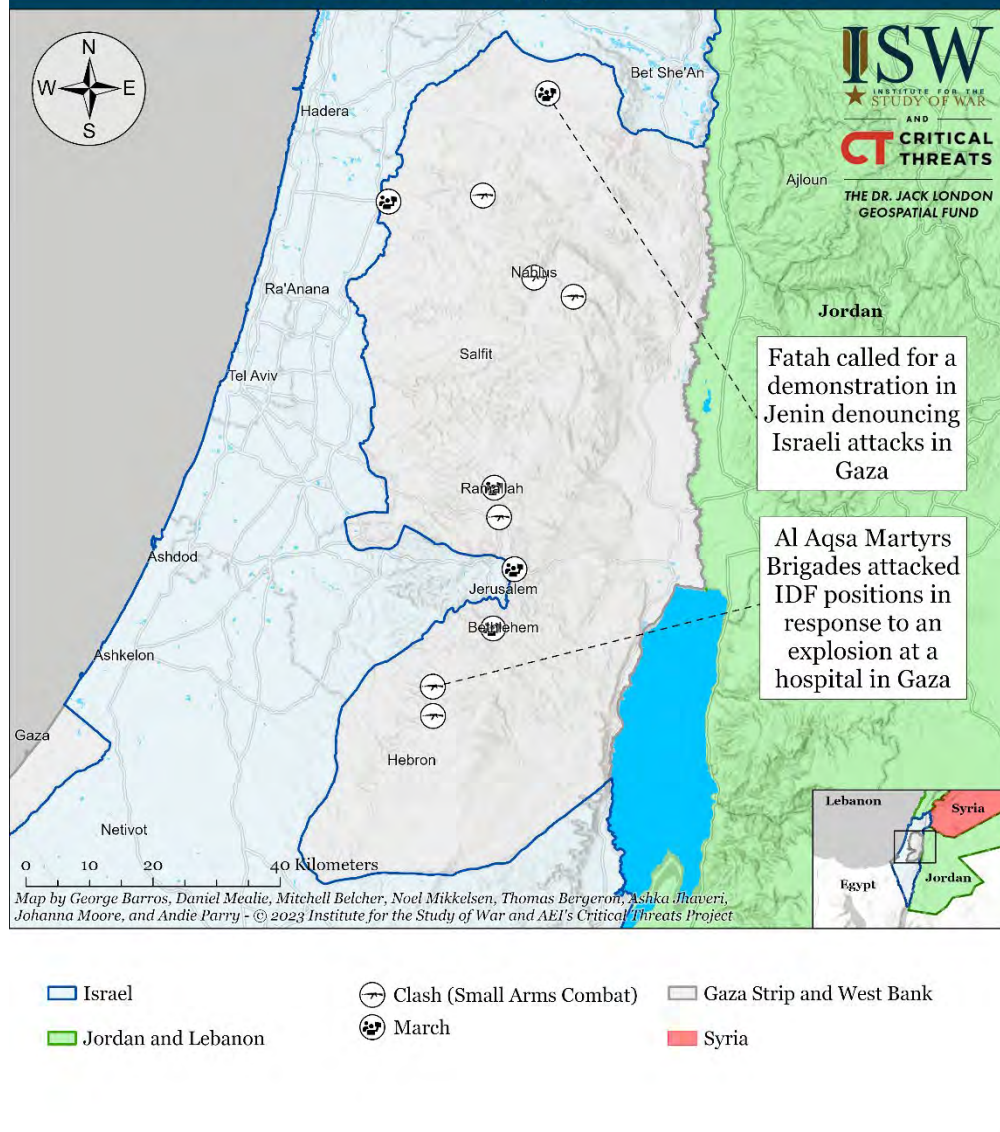
Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Palestinian militias are hitting civilian and military targets in their indirect fire attacks. Hamas is continuing to target civilians throughout Israel from the Gaza Strip, including in Tel Aviv, Beersheba, and Haifa.[6] Hamas targeted Israeli forces with mortars and rockets near Sufa, Mufakim, Eshkol, and Kfar Azza in five separate attacks on October 17.[7] Palestinian militias are also continuing to target southern Israeli towns that the IDF has evacuated and designated as military zones. Ninety percent of Sderot's civilians have departed the city, for instance, which Israel designated a militarized zone on October 16.[8] The IDF deployed units to this area in recent days, suggesting that the militias seek to target IDF military assets in addition to civilians.[9]

IDF airstrikes into the Gaza Strip have killed several senior Hamas officials since the war began on October 7. Three senior IDF officers told the New York Times that the goal of Israeli operations is to "wipe out the top political and military hierarchy of Hamas." [10] Multiple separate IDF airstrikes into the Gaza Strip killed Hamas' Shura Council chief, the al Qassem Brigades Central Brigade commander, and at least two relatives of Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh on October 17.[11] Israel has conducted at least 10 airstrikes against senior Hamas, PIJ, and other militia officials since October 8.[12]

West Bank

Clashes in the West Bank as of October 17, 3:00 PM ET



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

The rate of small arms clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants in the West Bank remained low on October 17 after peaking on October 13. CTP-ISW recorded seven small arms clashes in the West Bank and five demonstrations in support of the Palestinian resistance and denouncing Israeli attacks into the Gaza Strip. Hamas remains committed to expanding the war to the West Bank.^[13] Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh called for mobilization in the West Bank following an explosion at a hospital in the Gaza Strip on October 17, which may increase the rate of clashes in the coming days.^[14] The IDF said that PIJ conducted a rocket attack that failed and hit the active hospital.^[15] The Hamas-run Health Ministry contrastingly claimed that an Israeli airstrike hit the hospital. The explosion has reportedly killed hundreds.^[16] ISW cannot independently verify the cause of the explosion or the exact death toll.^[17] The Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed to attack IDF positions in the West Bank in response to the explosion.^[18]

LH-affiliated Al Mayadeen claimed on October 16 that the IDF's focus on the West Bank throughout 2023 contributed to its intelligence failure ahead of Hamas' October 7 attack.^[19] The report said that

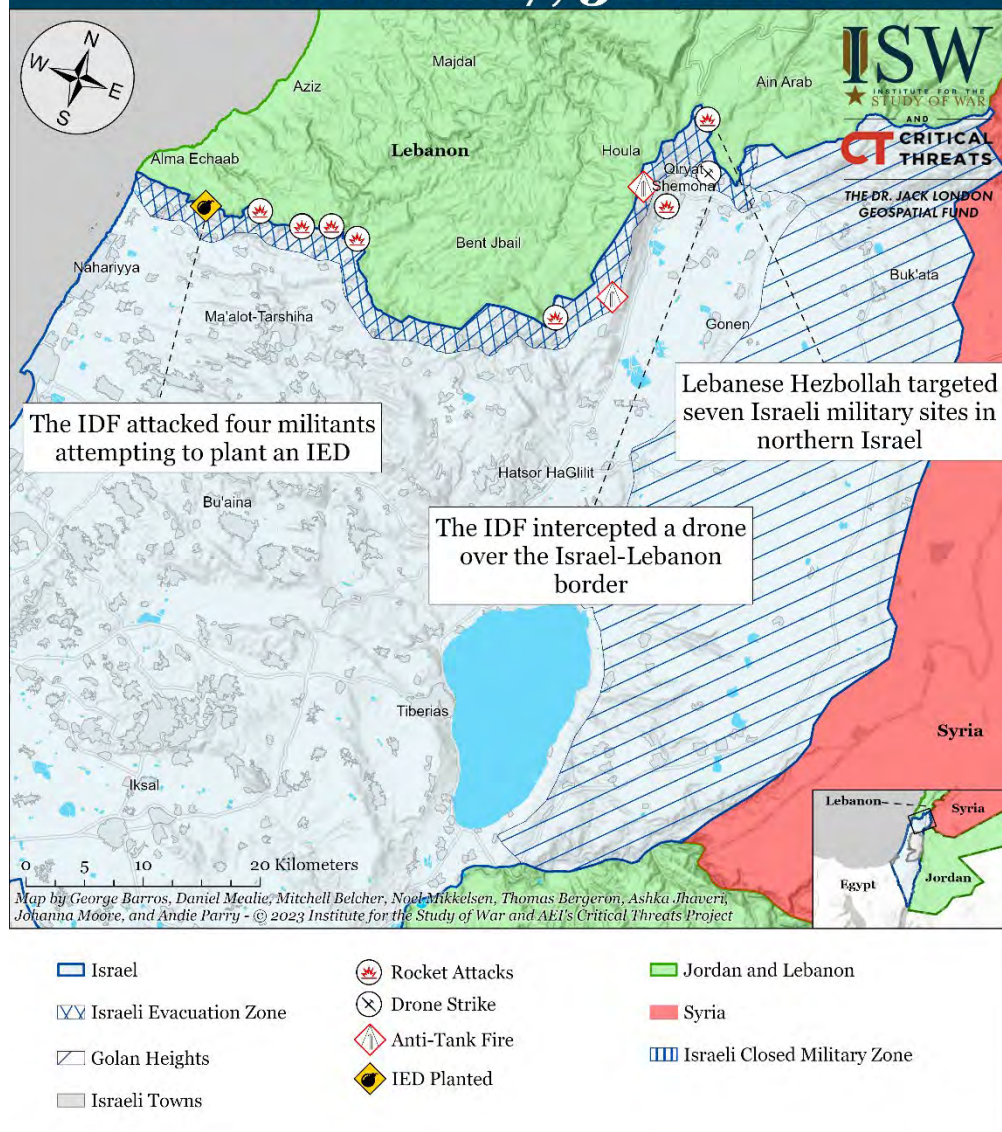
IDF redeployments from southern Israel to the West Bank drew IDF attention away from the Gaza Strip. It also alleged that Hamas deceived Israel by not interfering in conflict between Israel and other Gaza-based Palestinian militias throughout the year.

Senior Iranian regime officials, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, have called for the arming of Palestinian militias in the West Bank since August 2022, as CTP-ISW has reported extensively.^[20] These calls have coincided with an uptick in kinetic activity in the West Bank during the past year.^[21] IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami previously specified during an interview with the Supreme Leader's website in August 2022 that Iran seeks to arm Palestinian groups' "infantry" in the West Bank to conduct more ground operations against Israeli security forces and stoke unrest.^[22] The Iranian focus on the West Bank in addition to several reports noting the flow of weapons into the territory this year via Iran's proxy network in the Levant suggests that the West Bank remains a threat to Israel.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas canceled a meeting scheduled for October 18 with US President Joe Biden and other leaders in the Middle East, according to a senior Palestinian official.^[23] Abbas withdrew from the summit to protest the explosion at the hospital in the Gaza Strip.^[24] The Palestinian Authority was founded in 1994 and is the governing body that oversees the West Bank.^[25]

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Attacks into Israel from Lebanon as of October 17, 3:00 PM ET



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

CTP-ISW recorded 10 attacks from Lebanon into Israeli territory on October 17, including seven against military targets. Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) claimed responsibility for all 10 attacks on military and civilian targets along the Israel-Lebanon border, including an anti-tank missile attack on Metulla that wounded two IDF soldiers.^[26] This is the third consecutive day that LH has targeted Metulla. The IDF called for civilians to immediately evacuate Metulla and other areas along the Lebanese border.^[27] The IDF separately killed at least two LH militants attempting to plant explosive devices near Hanita along the Israel-Lebanon border on October 17.^[28]

LH activity on Israel's northern border creates opportunities for further operations against Israel. LH has targeted dozens of Israeli military targets in northern Israel since October 7, including Israeli border outposts, surveillance, military equipment, and barracks. CTP-ISW previously reported that Iran and elements of its Axis of Resistance, including LH, are preparing for the Hamas-Israel war to expand into a regional conflict.^[29] Israeli officials have furthermore reported on LH efforts to transport weapons to

Lebanon via the Damascus and Aleppo international airports.[30] The IDF has conducted three airstrikes on those airports in recent days to disrupt possible Iranian military transfers to the Levant.

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reiterated what other senior Iranian officials are saying about the Hamas-Israel war during a speech on October 17. Khamenei echoing these talking points demonstrates his support for them and signals to the rest of the Iranian regime that these are the official positions.

- Khamenei warned that the continuation of Israeli “crimes” against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip will make resistance groups “impatient” and that “no one will be able to stop [these groups].”[31] “Resistance groups” is the term that Iranian officials use to describe the proxy and partner militias that Iran sponsors throughout the Middle East. Khamenei’s warning resembles similar warnings from Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian since October 9. Abdollahian posted on X (Twitter) on October 16 that the expansion of the Hamas-Israel war to “other fronts” is becoming “inevitable.”[32] Abdollahian separately warned that resistance groups may take “preemptive” measures against Israel during an interview on Iranian state television on October 16.[33]
- Khamenei also accused the United States of determining Israel’s “current policy” vis-a-vis the Gaza Strip, echoing claims from Iranian officials and media since October 13 that the United States is playing a direct role in the Hamas-Israel war.[34] IRGC-affiliated Tasnim News Agency, for instance, recirculated Lebanese Hezbollah’s assertion that the United States is the “real owner” of the Hamas-Israel war and that Israel is “merely implementing American decisions.”[35] Tasnim similarly alleged on October 16 that American military commanders are overseeing some operations against the Gaza Strip because Israeli officers are suffering from “mental and psychological confusion.”[36] Abdollahian accused the United States of encouraging Israel to conduct more attacks against civilians in the Gaza Strip during a phone call with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell on October 17.[37] Members of Iran’s Axis of Resistance—including Lebanese Hezbollah and the Bashar al Assad regime—have criticized the US role in the conflict as well.[38]

Senior IRGC commanders are framing Hamas’ al Aqsa Flood operation as a prelude to future attacks on Israel. Former IRGC Commander Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari framed the attack as a “warmup” to prepare and train for future operations against Israel in an interview on October 15.[39] IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami similarly described Hamas’ operation as the “first stage” of Israel’s “hasty collapse.”[40] IRGC Deputy Commander Brigadier General Ali Fadavi added on October 17 that the Axis of Resistance will inflict a new “shockwave” on Israel if it continues its “atrocities” against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.[41]

[1] Sources available on request.

[2] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16362> ; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/35546 ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16364> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16365> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16366>

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[4] https://x.com/rybar_force/status/1714279273509573100?s=20 ; <https://t.me/hadasot10/86685> ; https://x.com/ignis_fatum/status/1714121916930252848?s=20 ; <https://t.me/hadasot10/86685> ;

[5] <https://t.me/hadasot10/86685>

[6] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28614> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28616> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28618> ; <https://t.me/almanarnews/131112> ; https://x.com/ignis_fatum/status/1714231341019992354?s=20 ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16362>

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[8] https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/35547 ; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/10/17/israel-sderot-south-evac...>

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[10] <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/14/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-invasion...>

- [11] <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1714131900481110070?s=20>; <https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog-entry/israel-strikes-gaza-home-of-...>; https://t.me/Hanata_Republic/2883
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- [13] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-july-14-2023>; <https://www.israelhayom.com/2022/10/16/minor-incidents-could-spark-widespread-unrest-defense-official-warns/>
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- [21] <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2022/12/14/mapping-west-bank-insurgency/>
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- [23] <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-gaza-hamas-war-biden-rafa...>
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- [27] <https://apnews.com/article/lebanon-israel-hezbollah-clashes-cadccde8c6ce...>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/131216>
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- [38] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/22/2971216>; <https://www.almayadeen.net/news/politics/لأسلحته-تجار-ب-حقل-إلى-غزة-المتحدة-والولايات-إسرائيل-حولت-كيف/>
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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 18, 2023

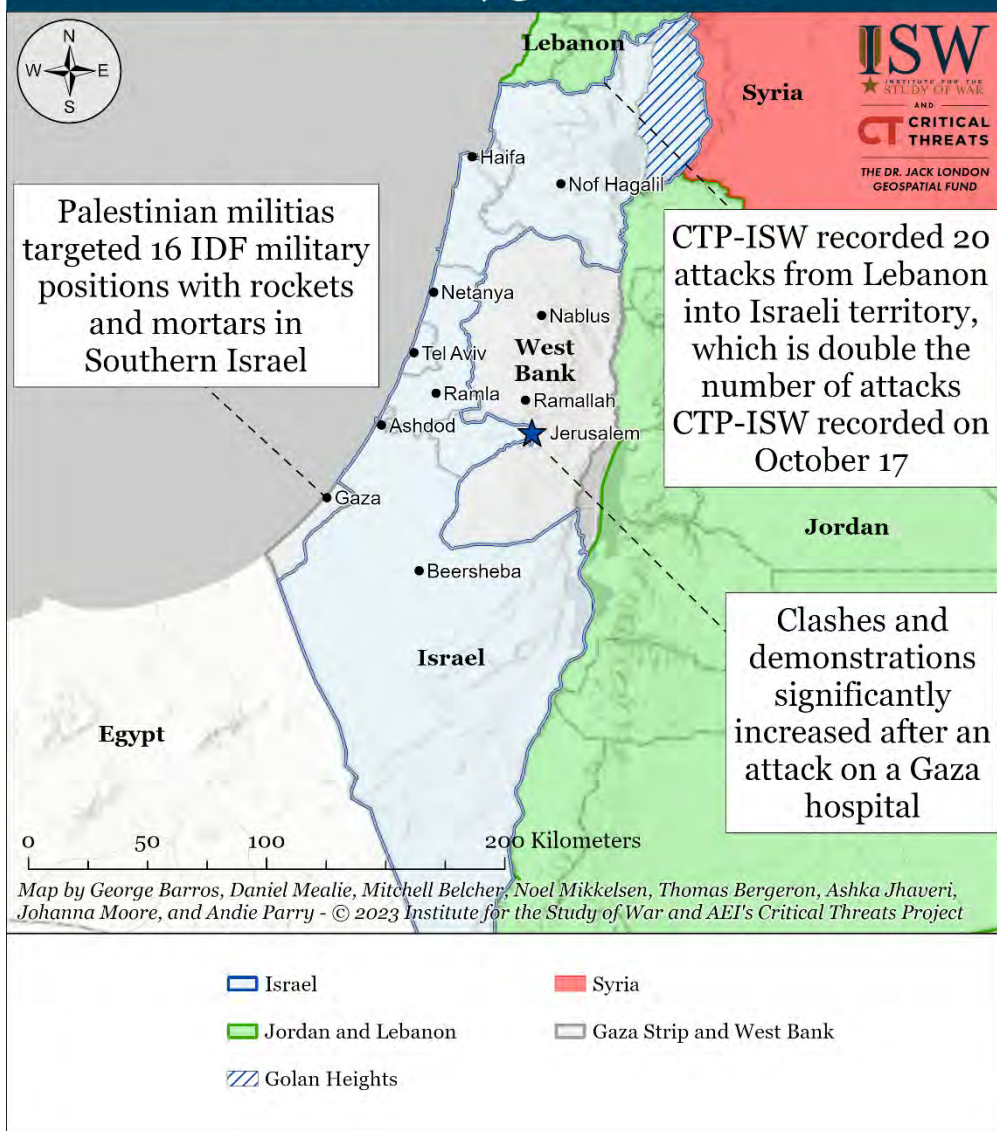
Iran Update, October 18, 2023

Ashka Jhaveri, Andie Parry, Johanna Moore, Brian Carter, and Amin Soltani

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, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 18, 3:00 PM ET

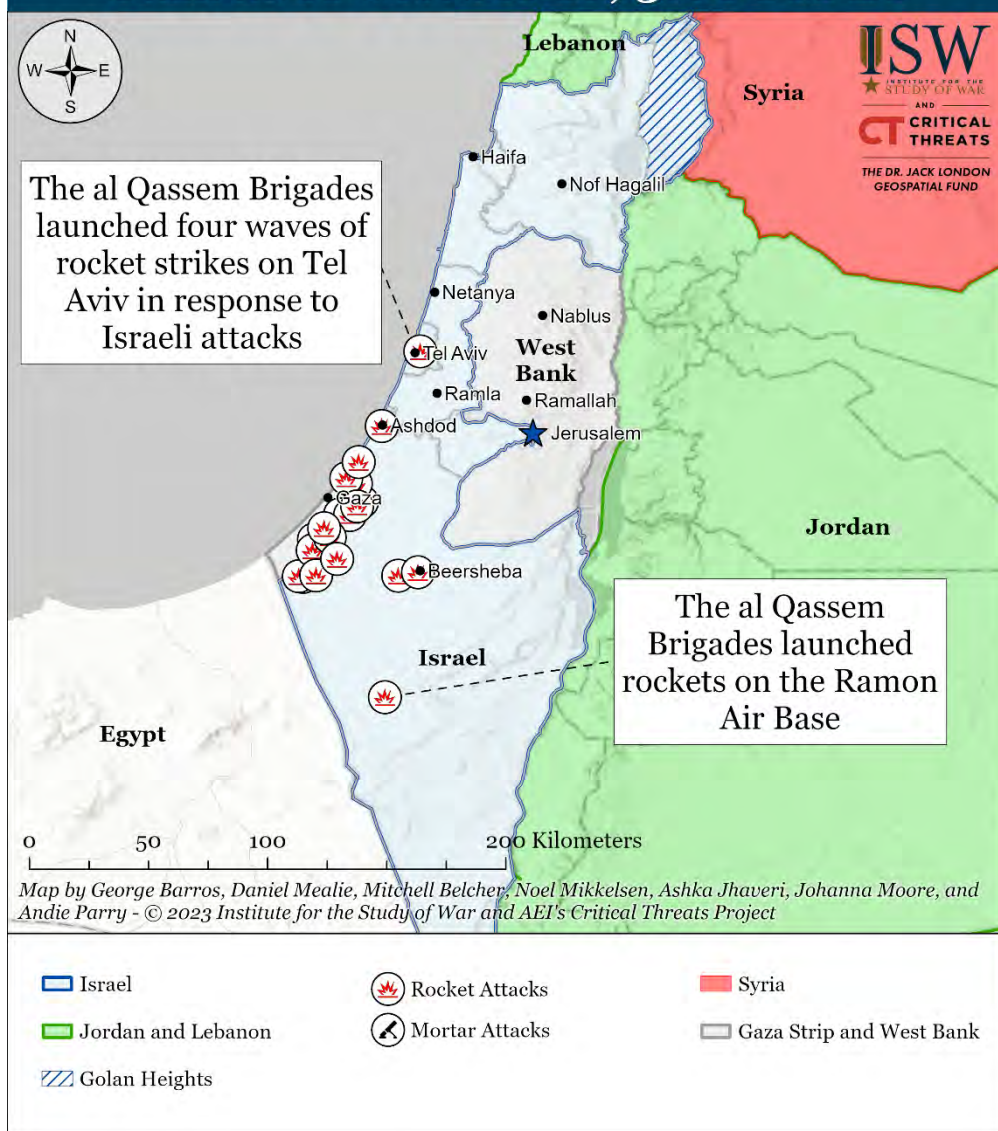


Key Takeaways:

1. Palestinian militias continued indirect fire into Israel from the Gaza Strip. Palestinian militias targeted 21 IDF military positions with mortars and rockets in Southern Israel.
2. The rate of clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces in the West Bank expanded by 470 percent.
3. CTP-ISW recorded 20 Attacks from Lebanon into Israeli territory, which is double the number of attacks recorded on October 17.
4. Two Iranian-backed Iraqi militias conducted separate attacks on US forces stationed at the al Harir airbase and Ain al Asad airbase in Iraq.
5. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq established the al Aqsa Joint Operations Room in support of Hamas' al Aqsa Flood operation.
6. Iranian officials and media are blaming the United States and Israel for the explosion at the al Ahli hospital in the Gaza Strip and warning about the potential expansion of the conflict as a result.

Gaza Strip

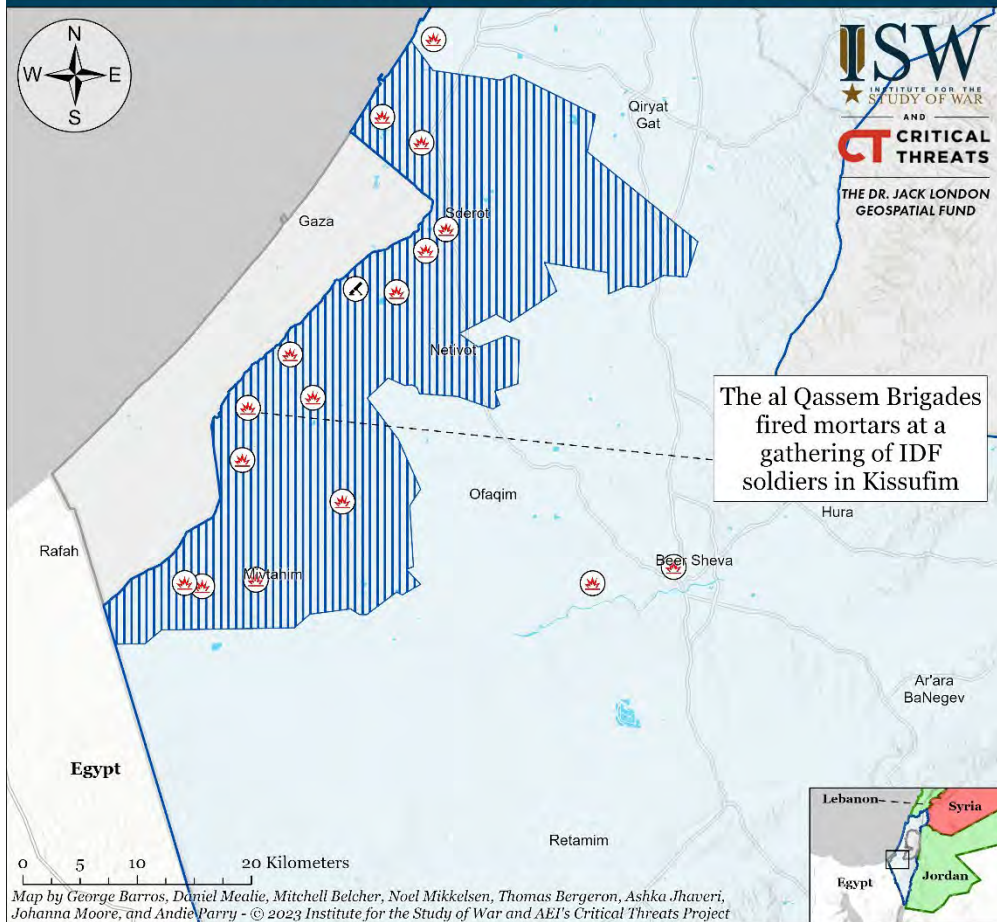
Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 18, 3:00 PM ET



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

Palestinian militias continued indirect fire into Israel from the Gaza Strip on October 18. The al Qassem Brigades— Hamas' militant wing—claimed responsibility for nine mortar and rocket attacks.[1] The al Qassem Brigades also launched four waves of rockets at Tel Aviv in response to Israeli “massacres against civilians.”[2] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for another 16 rocket attacks.[3] The al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades—the militant wing of Fatah—claimed two rocket attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip.[4] This rate of attacks is consistent with the rate that CTP-ISW observed in recent days.

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 18, 3:00 PM ET



- Israel
- Israeli Closed Military Zone
- Jordan and Lebanon
- 🚀 Rocket Attacks
- ☒ Mortar Attacks
- Gaza Strip and West Bank
- Syria

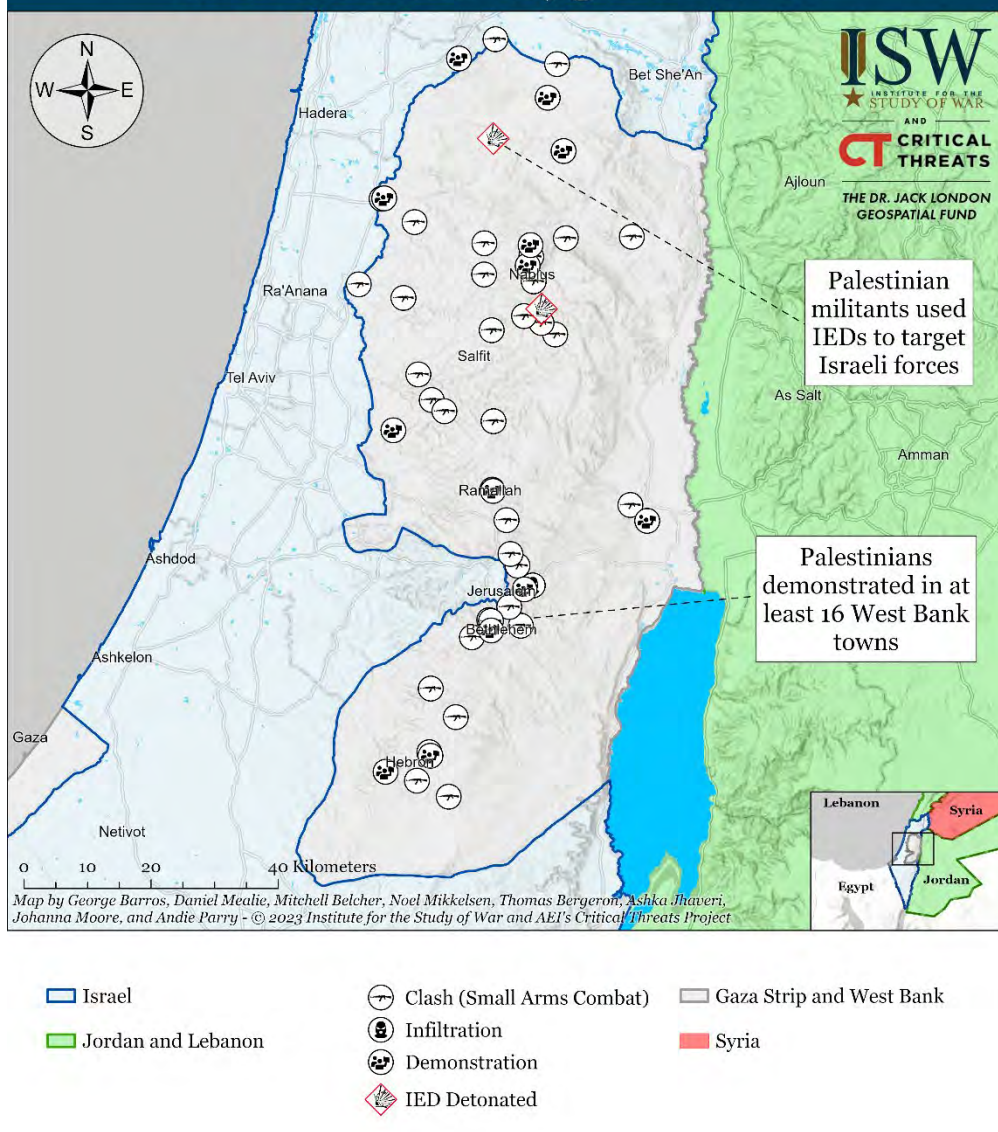
Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Palestinian militias targeted 21 IDF military positions with mortars and rockets in southern Israel. The IDF evacuated and designated the periphery of the Gaza Strip as a military zone on October 11.[5] ISW previously reported that the IDF deployed units to this area in recent days, which suggests that the militias seek to target IDF military assets in addition to civilian areas, such as Tel Aviv.

IDF airstrikes into the Gaza Strip continued to kill senior Hamas officials. The IDF reported that it killed the commander of Hamas' anti-tank unit in the Gaza City Brigade, who was a prominent weapons dealer and coordinator for attacks.[6] The IDF also killed Hamas' naval forces commander.[7]

West Bank

Clashes in the West Bank as of October 18, 3:00 PM ET

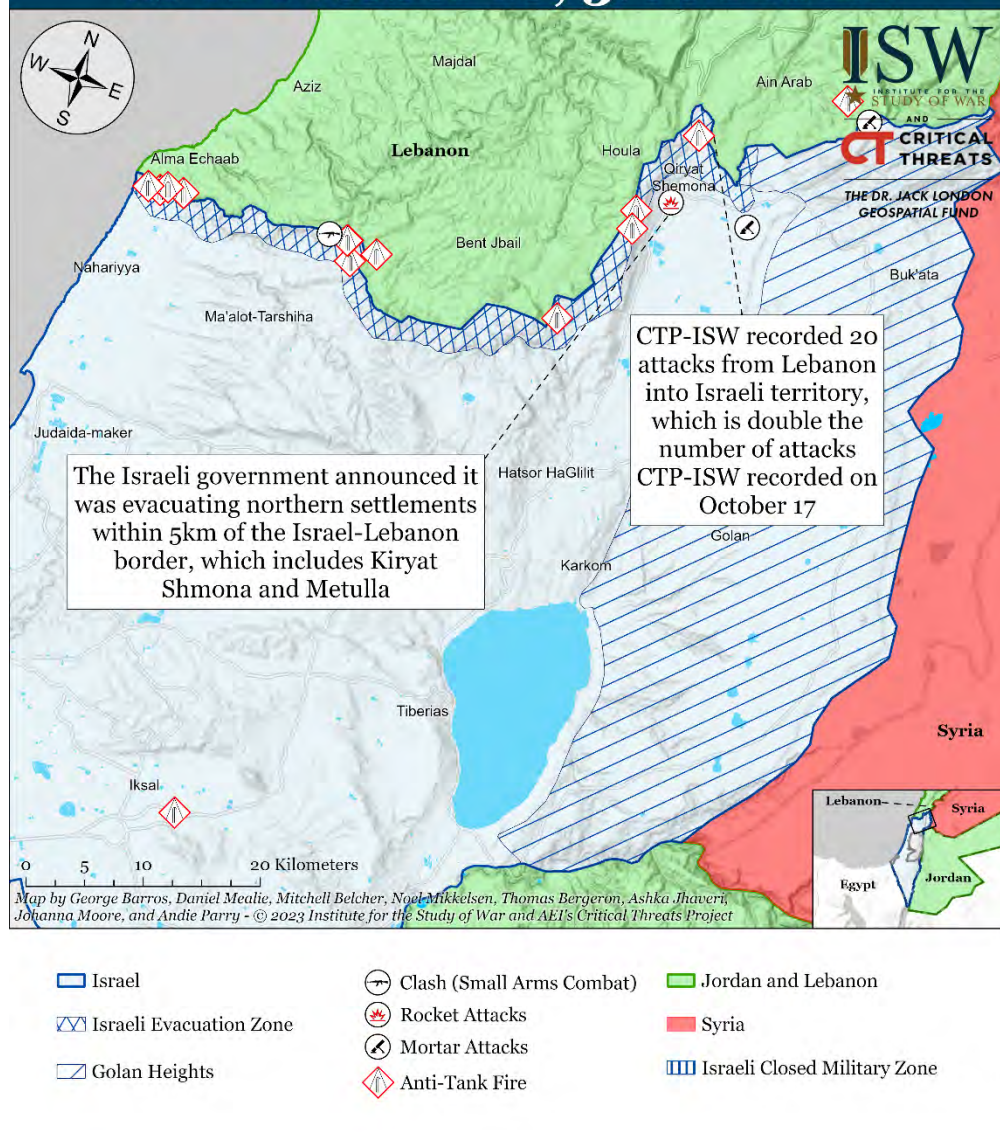


This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and marches in the West Bank.

The rate of clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces in the West Bank expanded by 470 percent on October 18.[8] CTP-ISW recorded 40 distinct clashes in the West Bank.[9] Clashes also expanded geographically to 37 cities and towns. Anti-Israeli demonstrations within the West Bank tripled on October 18, compared to the previous two days.[10] Demonstrators mobilized rapidly after the Gaza hospital explosion on October 17. This is consistent with CTP-ISW's assessment that the rate of clashes would increase after the bombing.[11] Immediately after the explosion, Hamas called for clashes across Israel and the Palestinian territories.[12] Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) similarly called for a "day of unprecedented anger" in response to the hospital explosion and Biden's visit to Israel.[13] Demonstrators in the West Bank likely responded to LH's call as well as Hamas'.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Attacks into Israel from Lebanon as of October 18, 3:00 PM ET



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

CTP-ISW recorded 20 Attacks from Lebanon into Israeli territory on October 18, which is double the number of attacks recorded on October 17.[14] The attacks targeted locations across the entire length of the Israel-Lebanon border. Fifteen of the attacks targeted military positions.[15] LH claimed responsibility for 15 attacks on military and civilian targets along the Israel-Lebanon border.[16] LH militants targeted Kiryat Shmona with nine rockets.[17] LH also launched an anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) at Metulla for the fourth consecutive day.[18] The Israeli government announced it was evacuating northern settlements within five kilometers of the Israel-Lebanon border on October 18, which includes Kiryat Shmona and Metulla.[19]

LH sources told a Lebanon-focused analyst on October 16 that Hezbollah recalled its cadres from abroad.[20] This is consistent with Syrian opposition media reporting since at least October 10, which claimed that LH redeployed forces from Syria to Lebanon.[21]

Palestinian militias remain active in southern Lebanon, likely with the approval of LH. The al Qassem Brigades said on October 18 that three of its militants died during an operation near Margoliot on October

14.[22] CTP-ISW previously assessed that LH probably approves attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel given the extent to which LH controls southern Lebanon.[23]

Syrian President Bashar al Assad blamed the United State and Israel for the Gaza hospital bombing on October 17 and called for three days of mourning.[24] CTP-ISW did not record any attacks related to the Israel-Hamas war into or from Syria on October 18, however. Over 1,000 Iraqi Popular Mobilization forces deployed to Homs Province from Iraq in the past several days, according to local opposition media.[25] The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) also transferred Iranian-backed militias from eastern Syria to southern Syria, the Golan Heights, and Lebanon from eastern Syria on October 16 and 17.[26]

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Two Iranian-backed Iraqi militias conducted separate attacks on US forces stationed at the al Harir airbase and Ain al Asad airbase in Iraq on October 18.[27] CTP-ISW previously reported that elements of Iran's Axis of Resistance, including Iranian-backed Iraqi militias, have threatened to attack US forces if the United States intervenes in the Israel-Hamas war.[28] It is unclear if the two attacks were coordinated or if the IRGC Quds Force ordered the attacks.

- The Islamic Resistance of Iraq – an umbrella group of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias – claimed responsibility for targeting US forces stationed at the Ain al Asad airbase.[29] US Central Command (CENTCOM) reported that US forces engaged two drones, destroying one and damaging the other.[30] Two unidentified US officials reported that the two drones were one-way attack drones targeting the base.[31] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias last targeted the base in May 2022.[32]
- Tashkil al Warithen—an Iranian-backed militia—claimed responsibility for conducting a drone attack targeting US forces stationed at the al Harir airbase in Iraqi Kurdistan.[33] Warithen claimed responsibility on behalf of the al Aqsa Joint Operations Room. Iraqi Kurdistan-based *Shafaq News* cited an unidentified Iraqi source, who claimed that it was unclear what damage, if any, the drone had done on the base.[34] Tashkil al Warithen reports directly to Iran's IRGC Quds Force.[35] CENTCOM reported that US forces stationed at al Harir airbase destroyed the drone targeting the airbase.[36]

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq established the al Aqsa Joint Operations Room on October 18 in support of Hamas' al Aqsa Flood operation.[37] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq released its statement following accusations that Israel and the United States were responsible for the explosion at the al Ahli Hospital in the Gaza Strip on October 17. The Islamic Resistance of Iraq is comprised of Iranian-backed militias, such as Asaib Ahl al Haq, Kataib Hezbollah, Badr Organization, Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba, Kataib Seyyed al Shohada, Ashab al Kahf, and Kataib Imam Ali.[38] Two unidentified members of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias cited by *Associated Press* reported that Iran has not given orders to "join the wider battle on Israel." [39] Prominent Iranian-backed militias issued statements condemning Israel for allegedly striking the al Ahli Hospital but did not call for attacks as they had previously threatened to do.[40]

Iranian officials and media are blaming the United States and Israel for the October 17 explosion at the al Ahli hospital in the Gaza Strip and warning about the potential expansion of the conflict as a result. President Ebrahim Raisi claimed that "US-Israeli bombs" were dropped on the hospital on social media on October 18, echoing claims from Iranian officials and media since October 13 that the United States is playing a direct role in the Hamas-Israel war.[41] Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian claimed that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was present in the Israeli operations room during a meeting with his Qatari counterpart Sultan bin Saad al Muraikhi in Jeddah on October 18.[42] IRGC-affiliated *Tasnim News Agency* claimed that the United States had devised the Israeli attack to disincentivize an Israeli ground operation into Gaza.[43] Several Iranian regime outlets claimed either that American munitions were used in or that the United States had authorized the strike on the hospital.[44] These same outlets claimed that Iranian protesters were holding the United States responsible for the specific attack and greater Israeli "crimes" in Gaza on October 18.[45]

- President Ebrahim Raisi stated that Israel's "criminal, crazy, and illegal actions" will expand the war to the region during a meeting with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on October 17.[46] The Raisi administration similarly issued a statement on October 18 warning that the hospital bombing "will not go unanswered." [47] The Artesh—Iran's conventional military—also published a statement on October 18 condemning Israel for allegedly attacking the al Ahli hospital and warning that the Artesh is looking to respond "forcefully" to the attack and bring the "criminals" to trial.[48]

- Expediency Discernment Council member and former IRGC Commander Major General Mohsen Rezaei warned on October 18 that a “big storm” is coming and pointed to the potential for the formation of new Islamic militant groups seeking to enter the conflict with Israel.[49] Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf similarly warned that Israel is “opening up the gates of hell with their own hands and are filling all Muslims with wrath,” further arguing that Muslims are ready to make sacrifices to confront Israel.[50]
- Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri echoed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s October 17 remarks that “the resistance” will lose its patience were Israel to continue its “war crimes” within a statement condemning the alleged attack on the al Ahli hospital on October 18.[51] IRGC-affiliated *Fars News Agency* published an article warning that “the resistance” will deliver an “even harder slap” against the Israeli regime while pointing to the “activation” of LH on the northern front.[52] “The resistance” is the term that Iranian officials and media use to describe the proxy and partner militias that Iran sponsors throughout the Middle East. Iran and elements of its Axis of Resistance have been messaging that the Hamas-Israel war could expand geographically into a multi-front conflict since October 13.[53] CTP-ISW is closely monitoring the situation to forecast whether such a scenario is becoming more or less likely. CTP-ISW previously assessed that Iran seeks to avoid entering a direct conflict with Israel, however.[54] Iranian officials, for instance, combined their warnings about the risk of conflict expansion on October 18 with calls for the international community to help bring about a ceasefire and impose punitive measures on Israel for its “war crimes,” including severing diplomatic ties and imposing an oil embargo and broader economic sanctions.[55] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Iran would likely provide material and financial support to its proxies to fight Israel rather than get directly involved in the Israel-Hamas war were this war to expand into a regional conflict.[56]

Palestinian militias are using the October 17 explosion on the al Ahli hospital in the Gaza Strip to frame the United States as a belligerent in the Israel-Hamas war. The IDF said that PIJ conducted a rocket attack that failed and hit the active hospital. The IDF spokesman noted that 450 rockets from the Gaza Strip have failed and fallen short since October 7.[57] The Hamas-run Health Ministry contrastingly and falsely claimed that an Israeli airstrike hit the hospital and that hundreds of people died. A senior adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Hamas of inflating civilian casualty numbers.[58]

- The IDF released an audio recording of two Hamas militants discussing how PIJ fired the rocket and noted that the rocket at the impact site was locally made. Independent analysts on Twitter and *Bellingcat* noted that images of the aftermath of the attack are inconsistent with reports of missiles or joint direct attack munitions (JDAMs).[59]
- A Twitter user posted on October 17 that “The Wall Street Journal: ‘The bomb that was dropped on the hospital was an American MK-84’ and that ‘this bomb is precision-guided, largest in MK family, and has about 950 kg weight.’”[60] *Newsweek* confirmed that the claim is false.[61] US President Joe Biden said the data that the Department of Defense showed him says Israel was not to blame for the attack.[62]
- The PIJ spokesman echoed Iranian rhetoric that the bombs used to strike the Gaza hospital were American bombs.[63] Hamas released a statement that the US adoption of the Israeli narrative that PIJ misfired a rocket is considered participation in the attack.[64] Hamas also stated its appreciation to cancel the US-Jordan-Palestinian Authority-Egypt summit scheduled for October 18.[65]

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas cancelled his attendance at the joint US-Egypt-Jordan summit following the explosion on the Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza.[66] Abbas, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi, Jordanian King Abdullah II, and US President Joe Biden were scheduled to discuss the ongoing Israel-Hamas war. Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi also stated that Jordan would only host the summit in the future if Israel agreed to stop all attacks and deliver aid to the Gaza Strip.[67]

Kataib Hezbollah-affiliated *Tura News* circulated calls to protests in solidarity with Palestinians at the US Embassy in Baghdad on October 18.[68] Ashab al Kahf called for Iraqis, “youth of the popular mobilization,” and other supporters to demonstrate in Tahrir Square, Baghdad on October 17 following the explosion the al Ahli Hospital. Protesters gathered in Tahrir Square and attempted to approach the US embassy but were blocked by Iraqi security forces.[69]

Iranian regime outlets and officials are attempting to generate further momentum for the current Israel-Hamas war. Iranian media circulated disturbing images of severely wounded or killed Palestinian children on October 18.[70] IRGC-affiliated media published a series of responses to Israel’s “infanticide” in

Gaza and recirculated calls for the expansion of "anti-Zionist" demonstrations in the West Bank.[71] Several Iranian officials and outlets claimed that millions of ordinary Iranians are prepared to volunteer in the fight against the Israeli regime.[72]

Violent protests occurred at US positions in the Middle East following LH calls for a "day of rage" in solidarity with the Gaza Strip. Hundreds of protesters demonstrated outside of the US Embassy in Beirut and attempted to remove barbed wire and barricades.[73] Some people burned a building near the embassy.[74] The embassy issued a travel advisory not to travel to Lebanon and recommended that US citizens leave the country.[75] Protesters attempted to storm a US base in Turkey, according to a pro-Axis of Resistance telegram.[76]

[1] Sources available upon request.

[2] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28634>; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28635>; ... <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28637>

[3] Sources available upon request.

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[5] <https://twitter.com/IDFSpokesperson/status/1712031420065919123>

[6] <https://twitter.com/AuroraIntel/status/1714512057817825364>

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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 19, 2023

Iran Update, October 19, 2023

Ashka Jhaveri, Peter Mills, Andie Parry, Annika Ganzeveld, Amin Soltani, Brian Carter, and Nicholas Carl

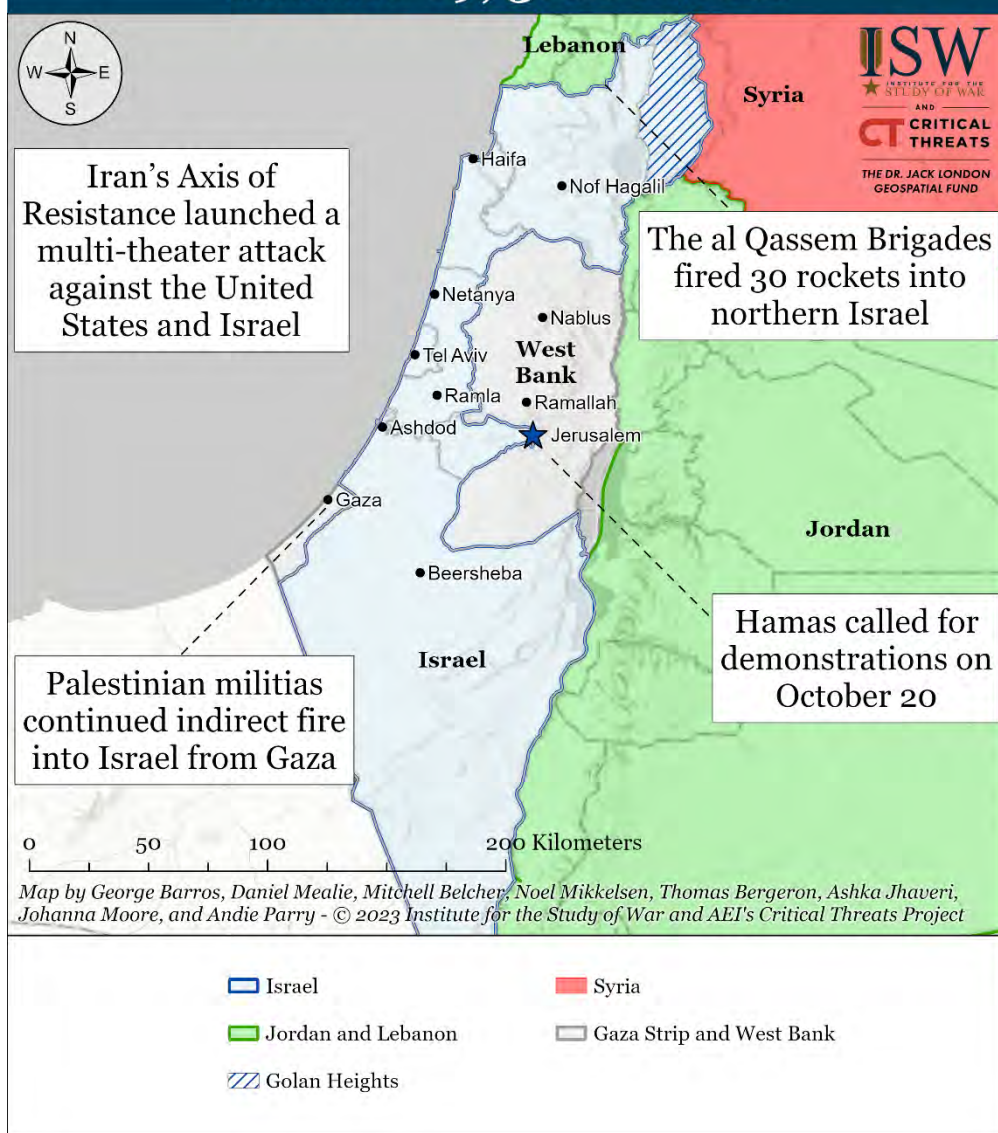
The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the 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. Palestinian militias continued indirect fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel. Palestinian militias targeted 12 IDF military positions with indirect fire and ATGM in southern Israel. An Israeli journalist indicated that Hamas is also trying to attack natural gas rigs in the Mediterranean Sea.
2. Clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces in the West Bank may increase on October 20. Hamas called for protests in support of the Gaza Strip across all cities and towns in the West Bank then, as part of Hamas' effort to expand fighting against Israel to the West Bank.
3. CTP-ISW recorded 13 attacks from Lebanon into Israeli territory, which is creating opportunities for further attacks into Israel. LH is allowing Palestinian militias to continue attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel.
4. Iranian-backed Iraqi militants in Syria conducted three attacks using one-way drones and rockets against US military positions in Iraq and Syria, marking the second consecutive day of such attacks targeting US forces in the Middle East.
5. Iranian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri held separate phone calls with his Russian and Qatari counterparts to discuss the Israel-Hamas war.

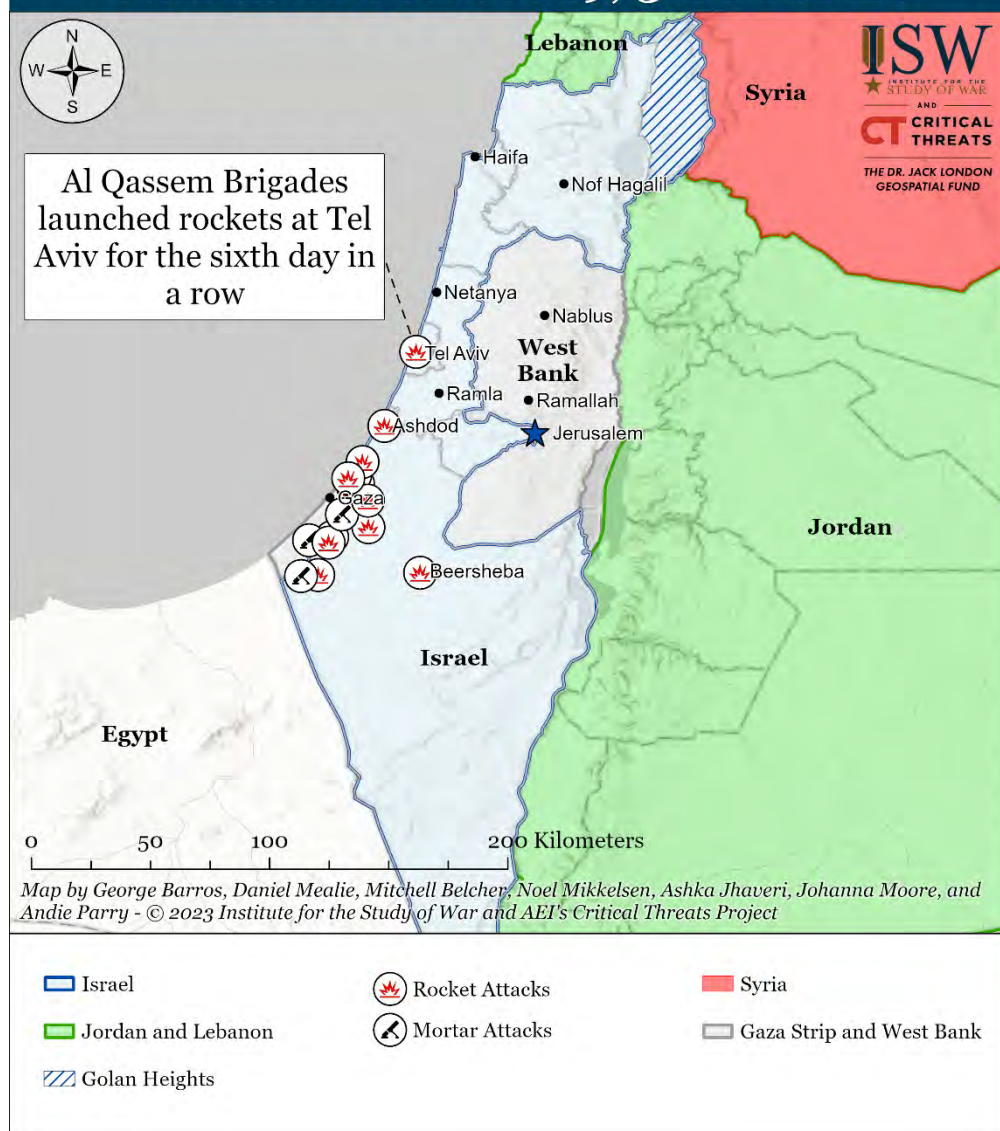
Israel-Hamas War as of October 19, 3:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip

Palestinian militias continued indirect fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 19. The al Qassem Brigades— Hamas' militant wing—claimed responsibility for 15 mortar and rocket attacks.^[1] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for another eight rocket attacks.^[2] The al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades—the self-claimed militant wing of Fatah—claimed two rocket attacks.^[3] The National Resistance Brigades—the militant wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine—claimed one mortar attack on an IDF military base in southern Israel.^[4] These attack patterns show how Hamas remains the most prominent actor attacking Israel from the Gaza Strip but also how other Palestinian militias have joined the fighting against Israel since the war began on October 7. PIJ published a message saying “save our shells, you will be blessed with flames,” indicating that PIJ is following Hamas' approach of reducing indirect fire attacks to conserve its stockpile and prepare for a prolonged war.^[5] Saraya al Quds launched 19 mortar and rocket attacks on October 18 compared to the eight attacks on October 19. CTP-ISW previously reported that Hamas began reducing its rate of attacks from the Gaza Strip on October 12 to conserve munitions.

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 19, 3:00 PM ET



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

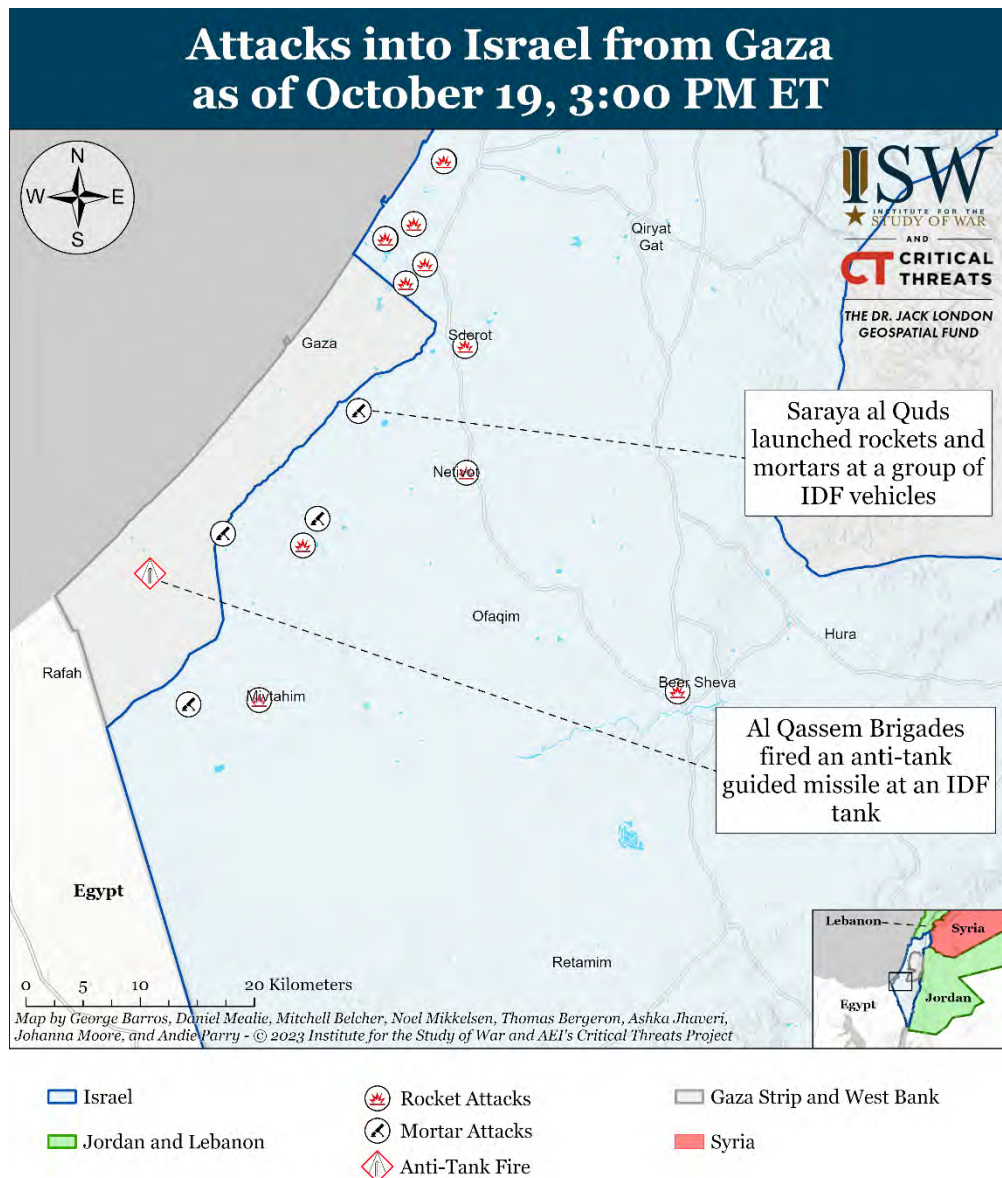
Palestinian militias targeted 12 Israel Defense Forces (IDF) military positions with indirect fire and anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) in southern Israel on October 19. The militias hit 21 military positions on October 18. The IDF evacuated and designated the periphery of the Gaza Strip as a military zone on October 11.^[6] CTP-ISW previously reported that the IDF deployed units to this area, suggesting that the militias seek to target IDF military targets in addition to civilian areas, such as Tel Aviv.

An Israeli journalist indicated that Hamas is trying to attack natural gas rigs in the Mediterranean Sea.^[7] The journalist claimed that the IDF has intercepted several attempts from unidentified militants to conduct rocket attacks on such rigs. Israel previously shut down the Tamar gas field, which Hamas struck in 2014, on October 9.^[8] About 58 percent of the energy from the gas field served Israel, while 15.5 percent was exported to Jordan.^[9] The Israeli Navy stopped Hamas attempts to send its unmanned mini-submarines into the sea, which Hamas could use to attack energy platforms, according to a report on October 19.^[10]

The IDF stated that some Hamas infiltrators may still be in Israel after the attack on October 7.^[11] Hamas sent hundreds of fighters into Israel on October 7 to attack nearby border posts, military sites,

and residential areas. The IDF noted that it captured an infiltrator who was trying to return to the Gaza Strip on October 18 and that there have been no new infiltrations into Israel “in recent days.”

IDF airstrikes into the Gaza Strip continue to kill senior Hamas officials. The IDF killed Hamas Palestinian Legislative Council member Jamila Abdallah Taha al Shanti and National Security Forces Major General Jihad Muheisen.[12]

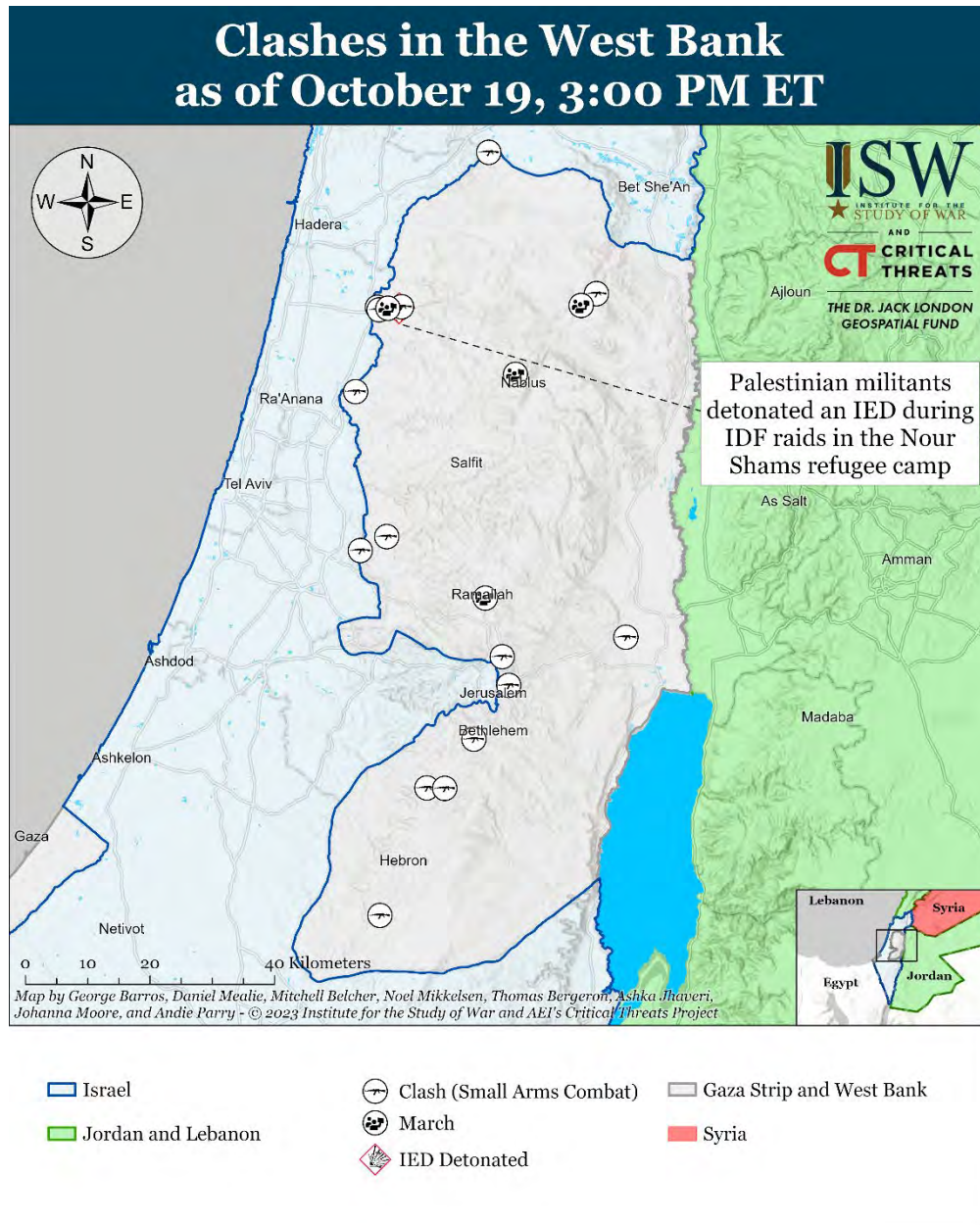


Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

West Bank

Clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces in the West Bank may increase on October 19. CTP-ISW recorded 20 distinct clashes in the West Bank on October 19—half the number recorded the previous day.[13] Hamas called for protests in support of the Gaza Strip across all cities and towns in the West Bank on October 20, as part of Hamas’ effort to expand fighting against Israel to the West Bank.[14] Anti-Israel activity in the West Bank has typically surged on days when Hamas calls for demonstrations and greater violence since the war began.

IDF forces and PIJ-affiliated militants clashed in Tulkaram, West Bank on October 19.^[15] The PIJ-affiliated Tulkaram battalion claimed an IED attack that killed an Israeli major and wounded 10 Israeli Border Police.^[16] CTP-ISW has observed three IED attacks thus far in the West Bank since October 7—all on October 18-19. IDF forces captured a stash of IEDs during raids in the Noor al Shams Refugee camp, which is near Tulkaram.^[17] Hamas- and PIJ-affiliated militants previously used IEDs during clashes with IDF forces in Tulkaram on October 5.^[18]

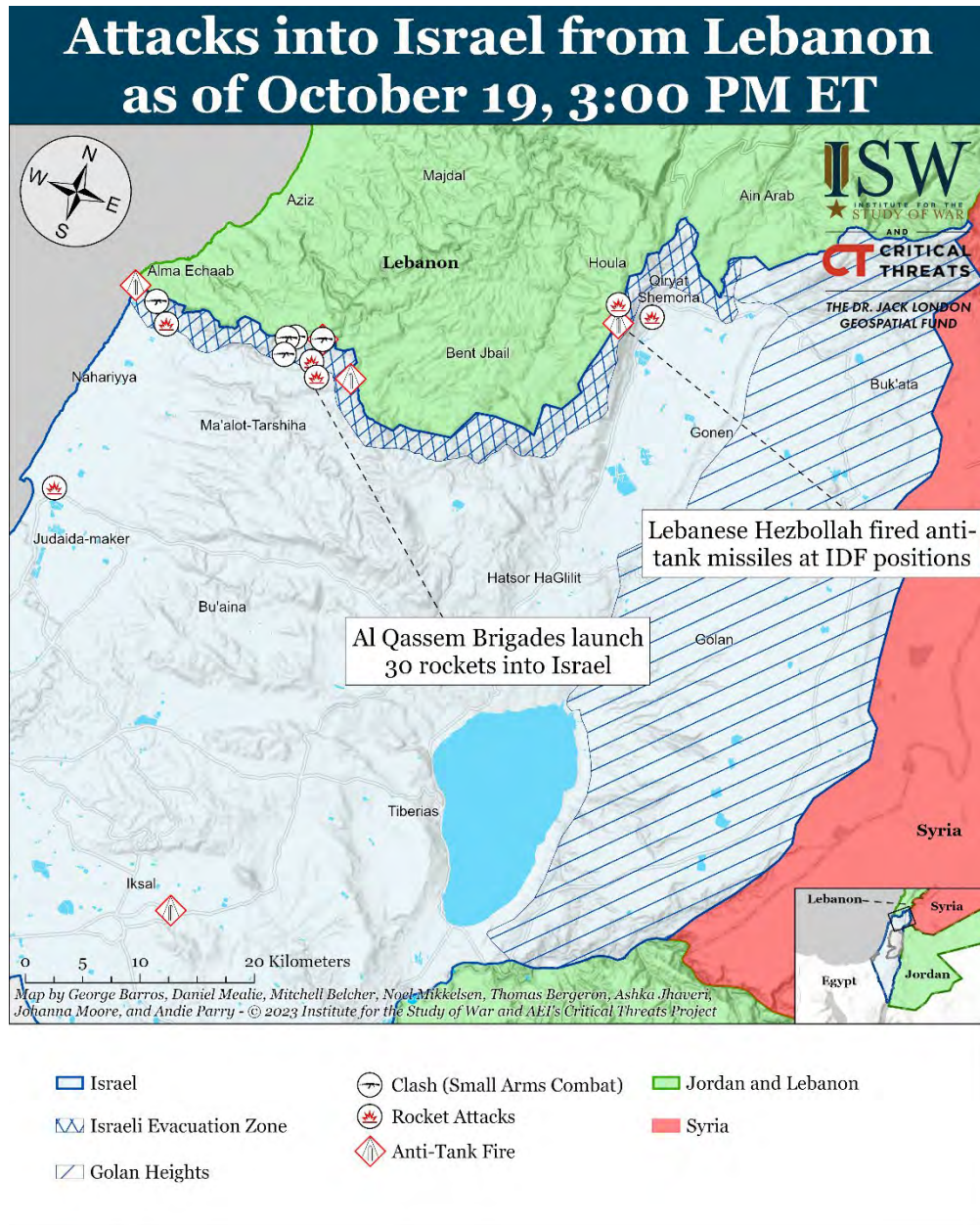


This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and marches in the West Bank.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

CTP-ISW recorded 13 attacks from Lebanon into Israeli territory on October 19.^[19] The attacks targeted locations across the entire length of the Israel-Lebanon border.^[20] Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) claimed six mortar and small arms fire attacks.^[21] LH launched four ATGM at Israeli military positions along the eastern border and released a video of its recent ATGM attacks on Israeli tanks.^[22] LH has also continued to target Israeli communications and surveillance equipment over the last week of fighting.^[23] CTP-ISW previously noted that these LH attacks create opportunities for further operations against Israel.^[24]

LH is allowing Palestinian militias to continue attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel. The al Qassem Brigades branch in Lebanon said on October 19 that its militants fired 30 rockets at western Israel.[25] CTP-ISW recorded rocket barrages fired toward both western and eastern Israel, however.[26] The IDF disclosed that LH gave the al Qassem Brigades permission to fire rockets from Lebanon.[27] This reporting is consistent with CTP-ISW's previous assessment that LH probably approves attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel given the extent to which LH controls southern Lebanon.[28]



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

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Iranian-backed Iraqi militants in Syria conducted three attacks using one-way drones and rockets against US military positions in Iraq and Syria, marking the second consecutive day of such attacks targeting US forces in the Middle East.[29] The Islamic Resistance of Iraq fired three drones targeting the al Tanf Garrison, Syria and three one-way drones targeting Conoco Mission Support Site.[30] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias also launched an unspecified number of rockets targeting US forces at Ain al Asad Airbase, Anbar province, Iraq.[31]

The Houthis launched at least three land-attack cruise missiles and eight drones “potentially” targeting Israel.[32] US Navy warship USS *Carney* intercepted the missiles.[33]

Axis of Resistance Red Lines

Members of Iran’s Axis of Resistance have articulated their thresholds for intervening in support of Hamas’ war in Israel

Possible tripped red line as of October 19

ISW

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AND

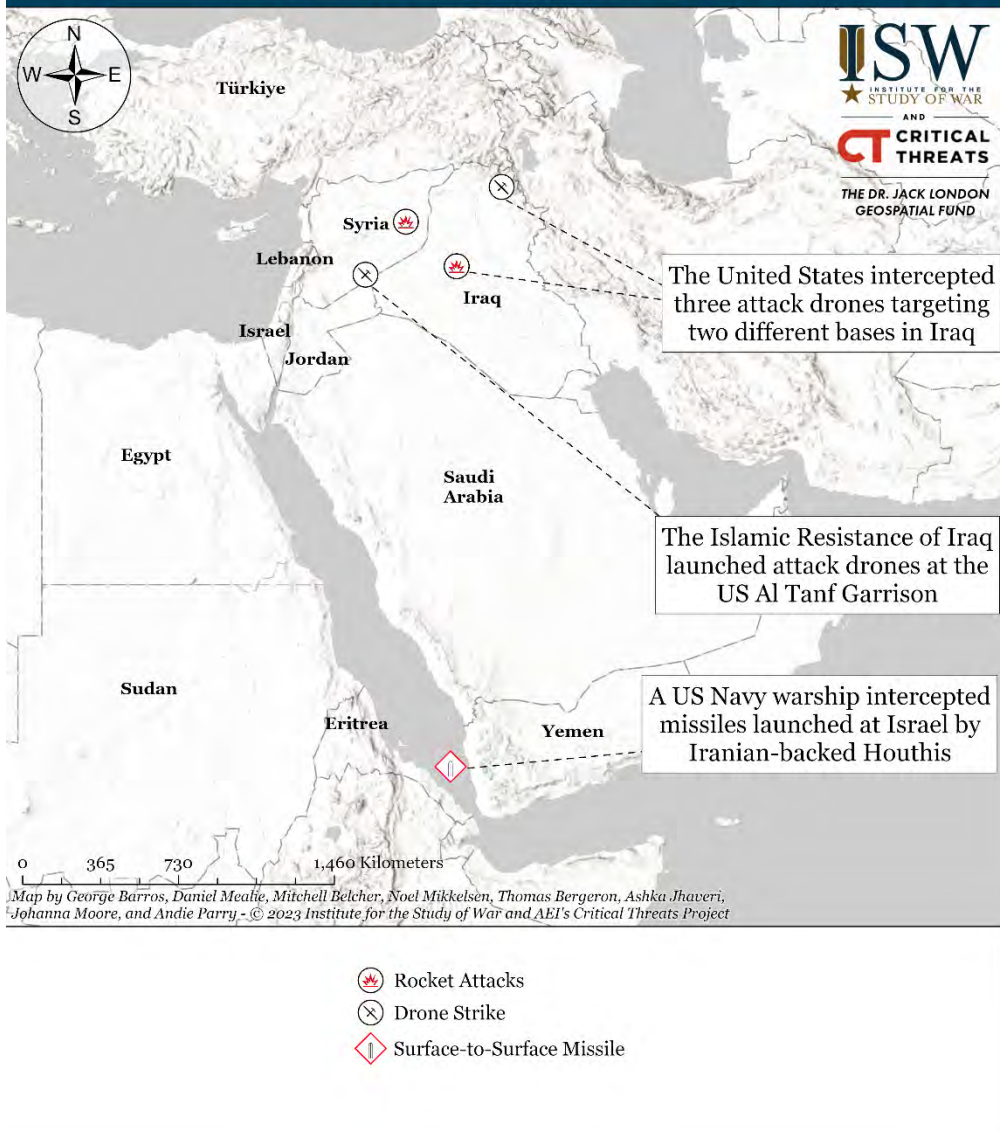
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CRITICAL THREATS

Actor	Threat	Stated Red Line
Iran	Conduct missile attacks into Israel from Iran, Lebanon, and Yemen and send fighters from Syria into Israel	Israel attacks Iran
	Direct its proxies to attack US positions in Iraq and Syria	United States refreezes \$6 billion to Iran
Lebanese Hezbollah	Enter the war	Israel conducts a ground operation into Gaza
Badr Organization	Attack US military positions	The United States intervenes in the war
Kataib Hezbollah	Attack US military positions	The United States intervenes in the war
Kataib Seyyed ol Shohada	Intervene in the war	The United States intervenes in the war
Houthi Movement	Conduct drone and missile strikes	The United States intervenes in the war

The Iranian-backed Iraqi groups and Houthis are behaving as if the United States has crossed their stated red lines of intervening in the war to support Israel. Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah (KH)’s military spokesperson said that the United States is an “essential partner in killing [Gazans]” and must “bear the consequences” on October 18.[34] KH’s military spokesperson also said that the United States is “aware of the capabilities of the Iraqi Resistance” and that the Iraqi resistance can target anywhere in Iraq.[35] Other Axis of Resistance factions have also expressed this risk since October 7. The Houthi Movement’s supreme leader said on October 10 that his forces would respond with missiles and drones if the United States intervened in the conflict.[36]

Iranian-sponsored attacks in the Middle East as of October 19, 3:00 PM ET



Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri held separate telephone conversations with his Russian and Qatari counterparts to discuss the ongoing Israel-Hamas war on October 19.^[37] Bagheri warned that continued Israeli actions in the Gaza Strip could force “other actors,” including “resistance groups,” to engage in the conflict, echoing previous regime rhetoric about the possibility of conflict expansion since October 13.^[38] Bagheri also called on the international community to take action to halt Israeli attacks into the Gaza Strip and on regional countries to disallow the transmission of American military equipment through their countries to Israel. Bagheri finally highlighted the American role in Israel’s “criminal operations,” consistent with regime rhetoric since October 13.^[39]

Iranian officials and media continued to highlight the American role in Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip on October 19. President Ebrahim Raisi decried the US veto of a UN Security Council resolution calling for a humanitarian pause in Israeli attacks into the Gaza Strip on October 19, emphasizing the world’s “hatred” toward the United States and Israel.^[40] Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian criticized the US call for restraint while it supports Israeli offensive operations into the Gaza Strip during his meeting with Saudi Foreign Affairs Minister Faisal bin Farhan on the sidelines of the Organization of Islamic Countries meeting in Jeddah.^[41] Abdollahian was echoing his own earlier remarks during a press conference in Beirut

on October 13.[42] Bagheri claimed that the United States is “commanding” Israel’s “criminal operations” during separate phone calls with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Qatari Defense Minister Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah.[43] Other Iranian officials claimed that the Gaza strip has been turned into a “laboratory” for American weapons.[44] Iranian media similarly claimed that the United States plays a role in Israel committing infanticide in the Gaza Strip, that it now “fully supports” an Israeli ground incursion into the strip, and has begun to supply armored vehicles for the Israeli war effort.[45] Some Iranian outlets also called for the closure of US military bases used to re-supply Israel.[46]

The Iranian regime is trying to rally public support for the Palestinian cause, possibly to prepare Iranians for the prospect of a regional war. Senior Iranian officials, including Raisi and IRGC Deputy Commander Brigadier General Ali Fadavi, attended anti-Israel protests in Tehran on October 18.[47] The regime has called on Tehran residents to protest on October 20 against Israel’s killing of women and children in the Gaza Strip.[48] State-run outlet IRNA published an interview on October 18 of young Iranian boys expressing their support for Palestinians and desire to go to Gaza.[49] Fars News Agency separately claimed on October 18 that 3.7 million Iranians have volunteered to fight Israel.[50] Numerous outlets have circulated images of severely wounded or killed Gazan civilians to stoke anger and hatred among the Iranian public toward Israel and the United States.[51] The Iranian regime has historically framed itself as the champion of the Palestinian cause. Iranian media has repeatedly recirculated statements from Palestinian leaders that Iran is the “biggest supporter” of Palestine.[52] Senior Iranian officials, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, have described the liberation of Palestine as one of the most important issues facing the Islamic world.[53]

[1] Sources available upon request.

[2] Sources available upon request.

[3] Sources available upon request.

[4] Sources available upon request.

[5] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16397>

[6] <https://twitter.com/IDFSpokesperson/status/1712031420065919123>

[7] https://twitter.com/Doron_Kadosh/status/1714925804302340292

[8] <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/4259531-israel-hamas-war-t...>

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[13] Data available upon request.

[14] <https://t.me/almanarnews/131691>

[15] <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-769177>

[16] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16400> ; <https://t.me/almanarnews/131642> ; <https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1715051107938922955> ; <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-769177> ; https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/police-say-10-officers-wounded-in-explosion-during-idf-raid-in-tulkarem/

[17] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1715000894834540769>

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[19] Sources available on request ; <https://understandingwar.org/background/iran-update-october-18-2023>

[20] Sources available on request.

[21] <https://central-media.org/36373/600/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%85-%D9%85%D9%88%D9%82%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%87%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%D9%8A> ; <https://www.almanar.com.lb/11086682>

[22] <https://central-media.org/36367/633/%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%88-%7C-%D8%AF%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%85-%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%85>

; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1714997682035380530> ; <https://central-media.dot.org/36373/600/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%85-%D9%85%D9%88%D9%82%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%87%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%D9%8A>

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[37] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/27/2974442> ; <https://defapress.com/ir/fa/news/624279>

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[47] <https://www.irna.com/ir/news/85263073> ; <https://twitter.com/JasonMBrodsky/status/1714454943472492694>

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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 20, 2023

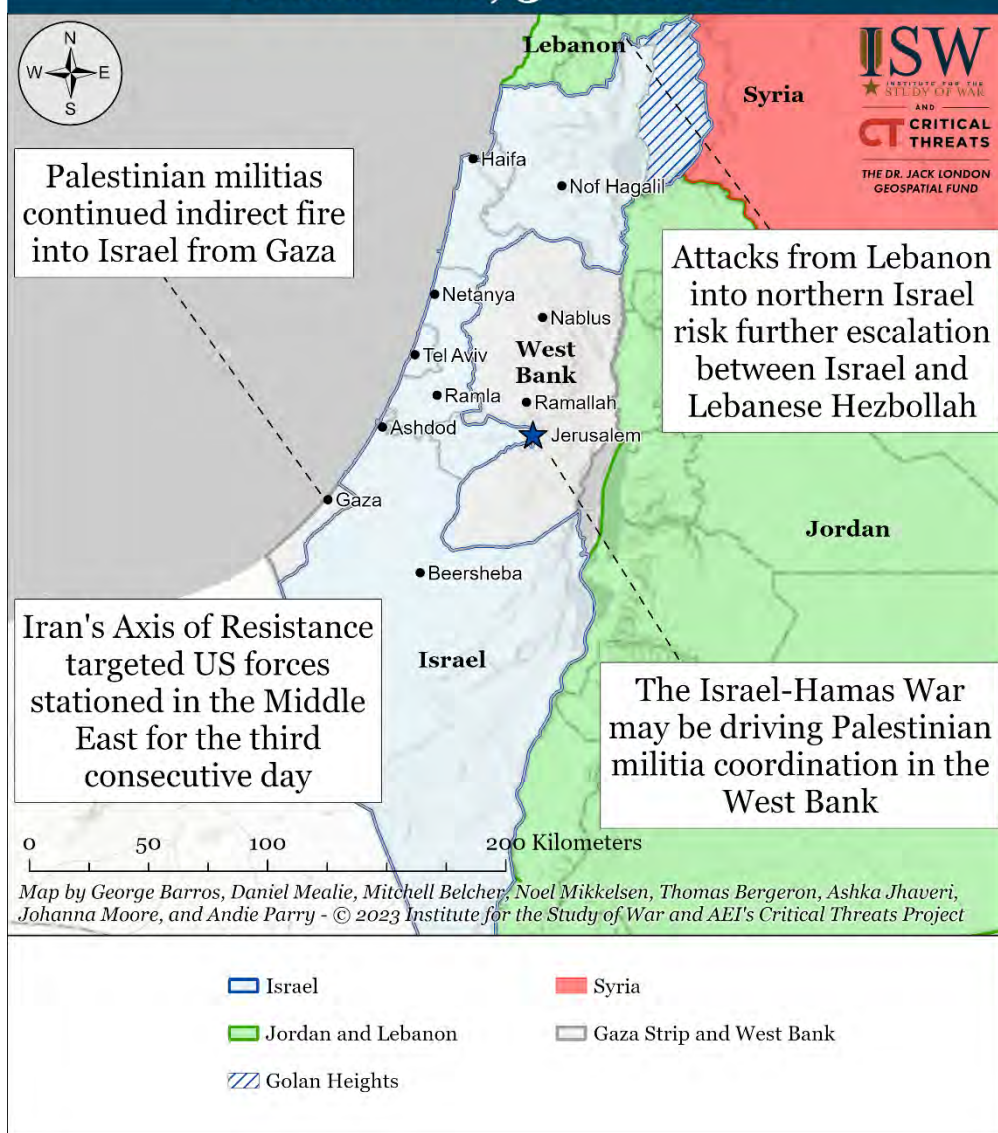
Iran Update, October 20, 2023

Johanna Moore, Ashka Jhaveri, Annika Ganzeveld, Kathryn Tyson, Amin Soltani and Brian Carter

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.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 20, 3:00 PM ET



Key Takeaways:

1. Palestinian militias continued indirect fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 20. Hamas also released two American hostages held in Gaza, marking the first time Hamas has released any hostages since its October 7 attack into Israel.
2. Clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli security forces in the West Bank increased following Hamas calls for protests on October 18. The Israel-Hamas War may be driving Palestinian militia coordination in the West Bank.
3. Iranian-backed militants targeted US forces stationed at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) and al Harir Air Base on October 20, marking the third consecutive day of attacks against US forces in the Middle East. Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have threatened to continue attacks on US forces in the Middle East.

Gaza Strip

Palestinian militias continued indirect fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 20. The al Qassem Brigades—Hamas' militant wing—claimed ten rocket, mortar, and drone attacks. Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad—claimed responsibility for another seven rocket attacks. This

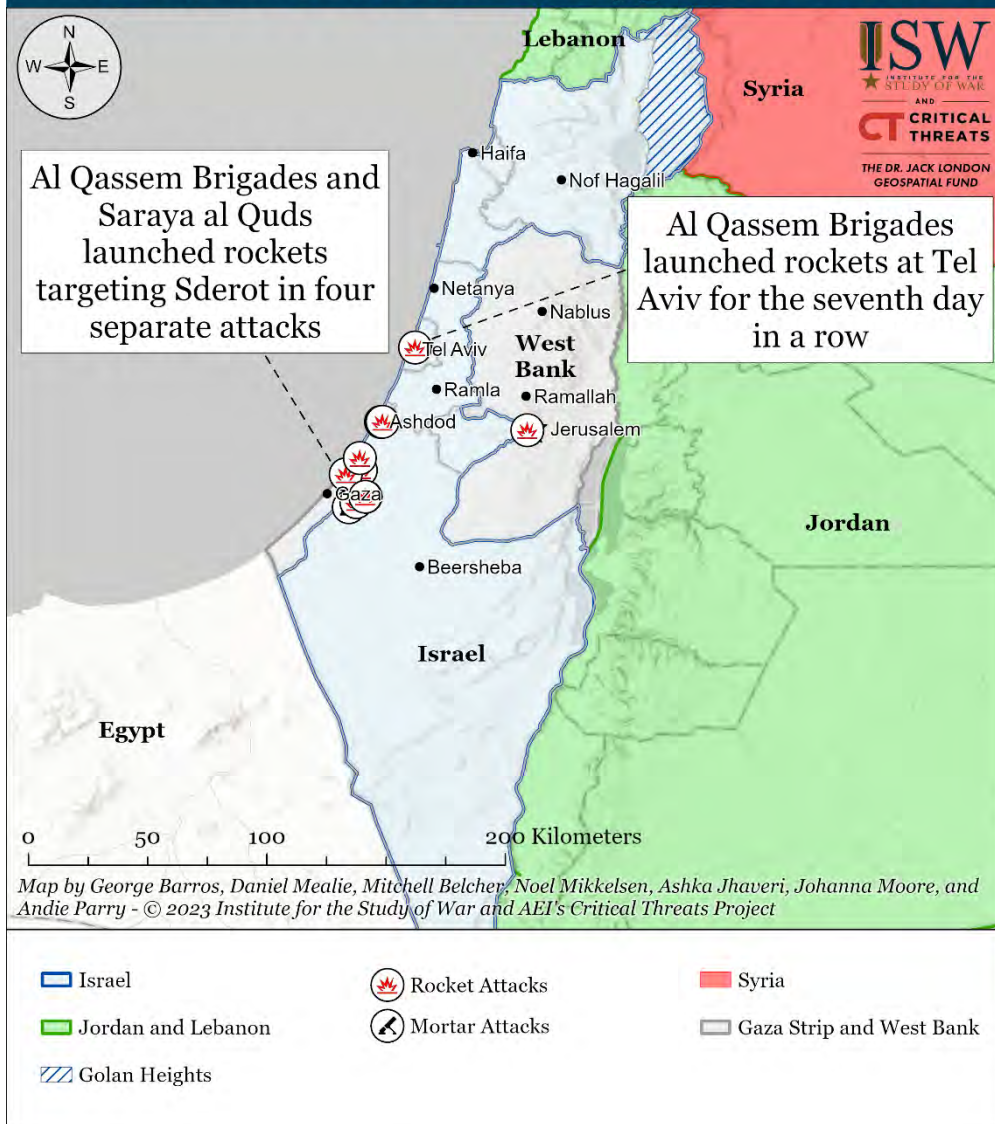
rate of attacks is consistent with the rates that CTP-ISW has observed in recent days. Both groups continue to frame these attacks as being in response to Israeli “massacres” against civilians. The al Qassem Brigades claimed responsibility for the first armed drone attack since October 15, which destroyed an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) tank.^[1] The al Qassem Brigades released a propaganda video and two photographs on October 20 of its drones and drone attacks and threatened further attacks.^[2] The al Qassem Brigades has used these drones to strike IDF soldiers and infrastructure in attacks since October 7.^[3]

Hamas released two American hostages held in Gaza, marking the first time Hamas has released any hostages since its October 7 attack into Israel. Hamas military spokesperson Abu Ubaida released a statement on October 20 claiming that it had released the hostages after Qatari mediation efforts.^[4] Ubaida also said that the hostage release was in response to US President Joe Biden’s “false allegations” about the group during Biden’s address on October 19.^[5] Hamas continues to hold over 200 other hostages.

IDF airstrikes continue to kill Hamas leadership and operatives in Gaza. The IDF killed senior Hamas engineer Mahmoud Zavih on October 20.^[6] The IDF reported that Zavih was responsible for weapons production for Hamas’ military wing, the al Qassem Brigades.^[7] The IDF said the leader “exchanged knowledge with other terrorists in the Middle East,” suggesting the leader supported the weapons production effort of other Axis of Resistance groups in the region.

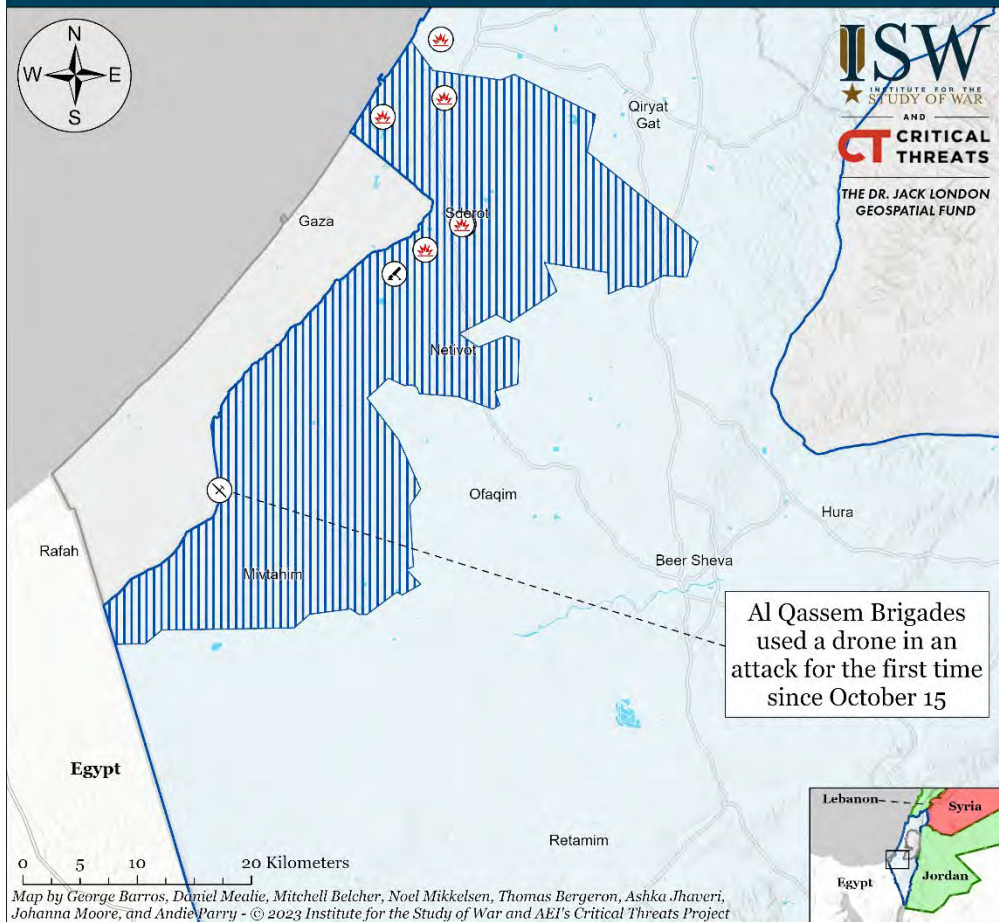
The IDF is degrading Hamas’ naval capabilities which Hamas could use to target Israeli gas rigs and other infrastructure, according to an Israeli journalist.^[8] An IDF airstrike on October 19 killed a member of Hamas’ naval branch in Gaza who the IDF claimed was plotting maritime attacks.^[9] The IDF also killed another member of Hamas’ naval branch in Gaza who participated in Hamas’ attack into Israel on October 7.^[10] Hamas has worked to develop its naval capabilities in recent years. The IDF reported in 2021 that Hamas for the first time developed unmanned sea vessels to launch attacks in Israel.^[11]

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 20, 3:00 PM ET



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

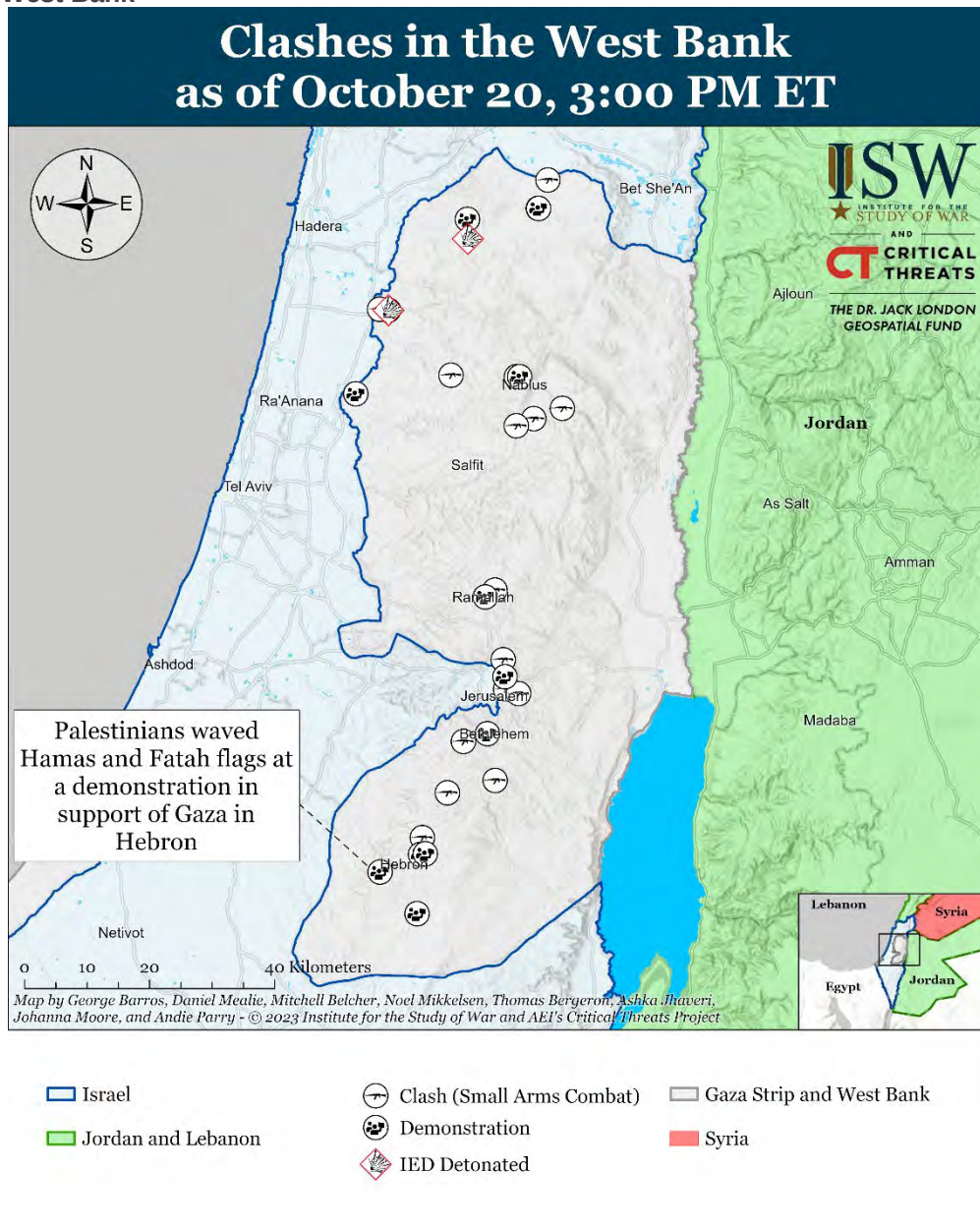
Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 20, 3:00 PM ET



- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Israel | Rocket Attacks | Gaza Strip and West Bank |
| Israeli Closed Military Zone | Mortar Attacks | Syria |
| Jordan and Lebanon | Drone Strike | |

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

West Bank



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

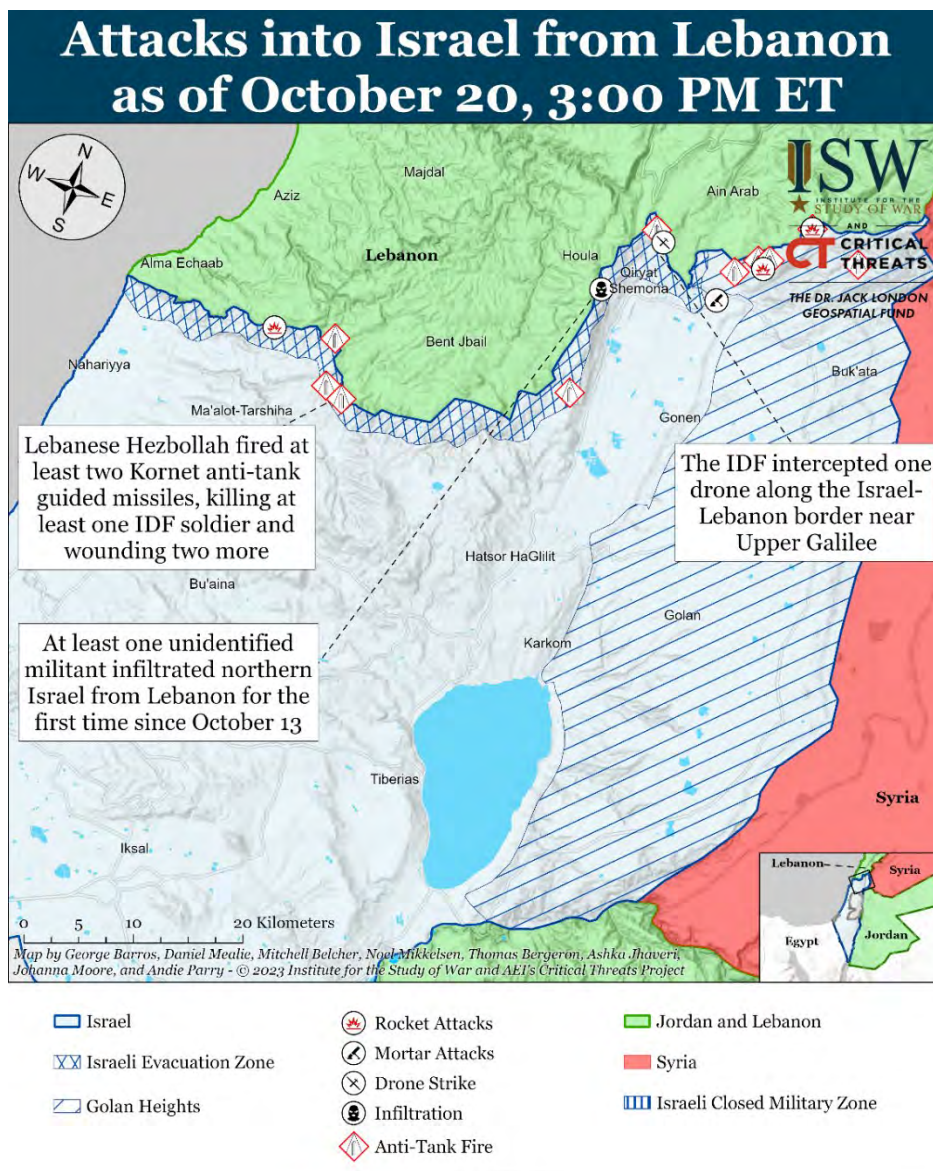
Clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli security forces in the West Bank increased following Hamas calls for protests the day before. CTP-ISW recorded 17 distinct clashes and 12 demonstrations in the West Bank on October 20. Many demonstrators condemned the Israeli raid on the Nour Shams refugee camp on October 19 where six Palestinians and one Israeli officer died.^[12] Unspecified militants detonated an IED targeting an IDF convoy at the camp overnight.^[13] Hamas called for protests in support of the Gaza Strip across all cities and towns in the West Bank on October 20, as part of Hamas' effort to expand fighting against Israel to the West Bank.

The Israel-Hamas War may be driving Palestinian militia coordination in the West Bank. The IDF said on October 17 that it arrested 440 wanted for arrest Palestinians in the West Bank—including 220 Hamas-affiliated Palestinians individuals—since the war began on October 7.^[14] The Palestinian Authority Health Ministry noted that Israeli security forces killed 41 West Bank Palestinians between October 7 and October 17.^[15] The UN added on October 14 that the week following October 7 was the deadliest week for

Palestinians in the territory since at least 2005.[16] CTP-ISW is closely monitoring the risk of conflict expanding in the West Bank.

- Palestinians held Hamas and Fatah flags at a demonstration in Hebron and Yatta condemning Israeli attacks and in support of Gaza. The IDF dropped leaflets in Hebron warning it will find and catch anyone who identifies themselves as a member of Hamas.[17] Hamas chairman Khaled Mashaal called on Fatah to defeat Israel together.[18] The Hamas and Fatah signed a reconciliation deal on October 13 after having been at odds for more than a decade.[19]
- Hamas claimed that al Qassem Brigades fought in the Nour Shams camp on October 19.[20] The PIJ-affiliated Tulkarm Brigade said that several Palestinian groups supported them during the fighting.[21] This is the first coordinated small arms clash that a Palestinian militia has claimed in the West Bank since October 7.
- Hamas continued to message that the resistance in the West Bank and Gaza must work together. Hamas' Political Bureau leader Ismail Haniyeh delivered a speech on October 9 praising the mass popular movement in support of Gaza over the past few days, noting that Israeli aggression extends to the West Bank.[22] Coordinated Palestinian resistance in the West Bank supports Hamas' stated objectives to expand the war to the West Bank.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights



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

Attacks from Lebanon into northern Israel risk further escalation between Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah (LH).

Two attacks in northern Israel killed at least one IDF soldier and wounded three more.[23] The IDF soldier killed in action on October 20 marks the sixth IDF soldier killed in action on the Israel-Lebanon border since October 7.[24] LH released a statement on October 19 that warned that violation of “Lebanon’s security” will not go unanswered, which suggests that LH will continue to respond to Israeli airstrikes that the IDF conducts in response to LH attacks.[25] LH targeted IDF positions with two Kornet anti-tank guided missiles near Natua and Barnit in retaliation for IDF shelling of southern Lebanon.[26] The attack killed one IDF soldier and wounded another, according to LH.[27] The IDF responded with airstrikes against LH positions.[28] At least one unspecified militant infiltrated Israel on October 20 for the first time since October 13 near Margoliot, seriously injuring one IDF soldier.[29] LH conducted 18 attacks targeting civilian and military infrastructure in northern Israel on October 20, which is consistent with its rate of attacks since October 15.[30] CTP-ISW recorded between three and five attacks daily between October 12 and October 14.[31] CTP-ISW has recorded between nine and 20 attacks targeting northern Israel daily since October 15.[32] The IDF intercepted an unspecified drone crossing the Israel-Lebanon border near the Upper Galilee region on October 20.[33]

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Iranian-backed militants targeted US forces stationed at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) and al Harir Air Base on October 20, marking the third consecutive day of attacks against US forces in the Middle East.[34] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq - an umbrella group of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias - targeted US forces stationed at Al Harir Air Base in Iraqi Kurdistan on October 20 in a drone attack.[35] It claimed to have launched two drones targeting the air base and reported that both drones “hit their target.”[36] This is the fourth attack claimed by the Islamic Resistance of Iraq during the last three days.[37] Militants from the Islamic Resistance in Iraq targeted Al Harir Air Base and Ain al Asad in Iraq and the al Tanf Garrison and Conoco Mission Support Site in Syria on October 18 and 19.[38]

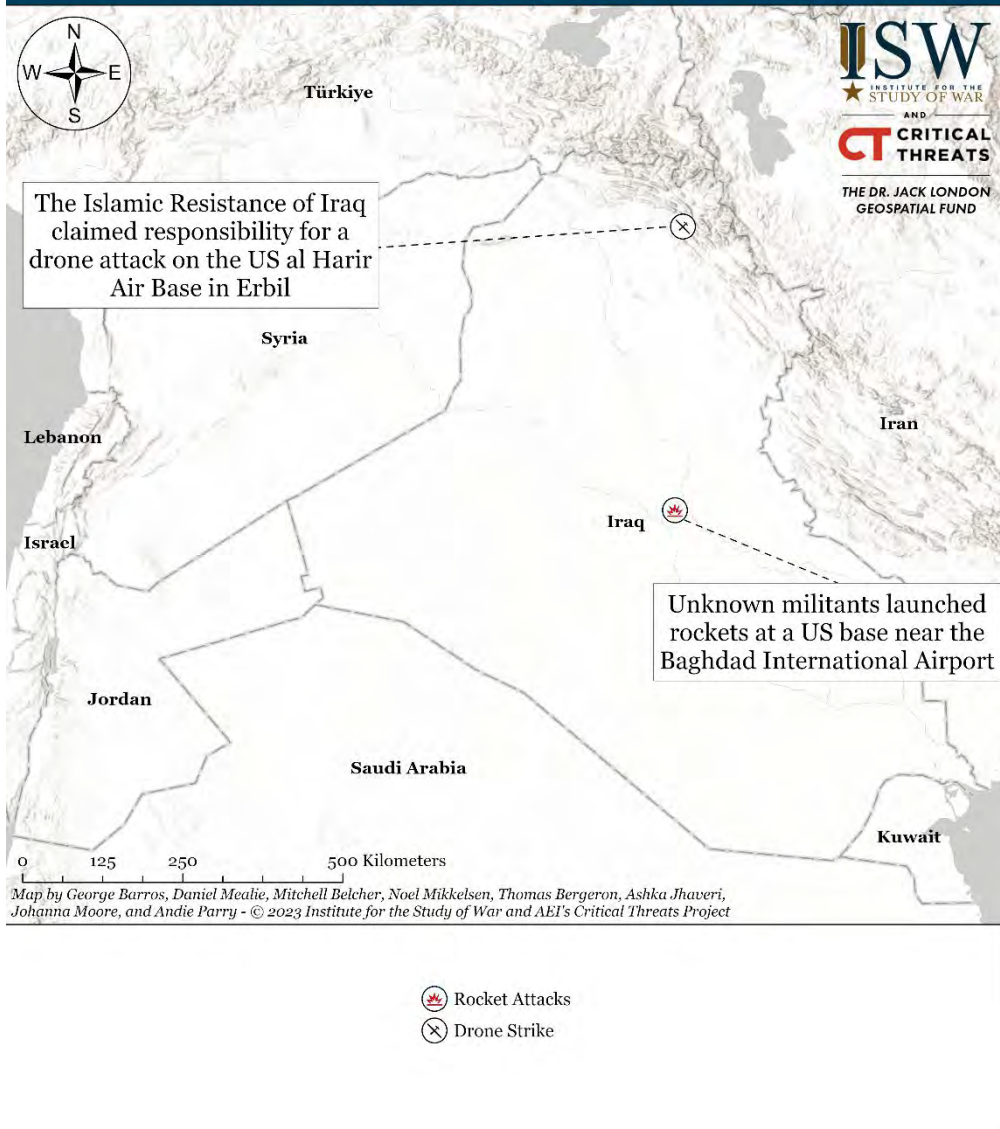
Unidentified militants targeted US forces stationed at BIAP in a rocket attack on October 20.[39] Iraqi Security forces found the rocket launch site in Jihad neighborhood, which is adjacent to the airport.[40] The counter-rocket artillery mortar (C-RAM) system at BIAP engaged two rockets, destroying one.[41] This is the first attack on BIAP since October 7. No group has claimed the attack on BIAP at the time of publication.

Iranian-backed militias have conducted eight attacks over the past three days across the Middle East in a multi-theater escalation against the United States and Israel. Iranian-backed Iraqi militias threatened to conduct attacks on US forces in the region if the United States intervened in the Israel-Hamas war, as CTP-ISW previously reported.[42] Iranian-backed Iraqi groups are currently behaving as though the United States has crossed this red line. Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri warned on October 19 that continued Israeli actions in the Gaza Strip could force “other actors,” including “resistance groups,” to engage in the conflict, echoing previous regime rhetoric about the possibility of a conflict expanding.[43]

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have threatened to continue attacks on US forces in the Middle

East. *Tura News*, affiliated with Iranian-backed Kataib Hezbollah, circulated a warning of additional attacks on US forces in Iraq “in the next few days.”[44] Iranian-backed Badr Organization released a promotional video repeating the group’s threat to attack the United States if it intervenes in the Israel-Hamas war.[45] **Ashab al Kahf released a statement on October 20 threatening to conduct improvised explosive device (IED) attacks on US forces.**[46] Ashab al Kahf is a member of the Islamic Resistance of Iraq which claimed the one-way drone attack on US forces stationed at Ain al Asad Air Base on October 18.[47] Ashab al Kahf claimed 3 IED attacks targeting US logistics convoys in Iraq between July and August 2023.[48]

Attacks on US Bases in the Middle East as of October 20, 3:00 PM ET



IRGC-QF Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani warned Syrian President Bashar al Assad during his visit to Syria on 15 October that Iran intends to use Syria as a second front if the Israel-Hamas war expands geographically.^[49] The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) began directing militias to the southwestern Syrian border immediately after the Hamas-led attack into Israel on October 7. Iranian officials have since messaged that a multi-front war against Israel is becoming more likely.

- Najafi reported that Ghaani established a joint operations room in Syria during his visit on October 15.^[50] The IRGC will oversee this operations room, according to Iranian state-news journalist Mostafa Najafi.^[51] An unspecified Iranian intelligence official said that Iran will start a “limited” ground operation from the Golan Heights and notably not from Lebanon if the situation escalates to protect LH.^[52]
- Syrian opposition media reported on October 19 that the Axis of Resistance, in coordination with the Syrian regime, plan to surprise Israel and create a narrative in which the Axis represents the main resistance to Israel.^[53] Iranian-backed militias are deployed along the southwestern Syrian border in Rif Dimashq and Daraa province.^[54] CTP and ISW have tracked the IRGC and LH from Syria and Iraq deploying to the border of Syrian and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights since October 9.

Iranian-backed militias have relocated ammunition and equipment to residential areas in Deir ez Zor City and Hatla, Deir ez Zor Province on October 19 according to a report from anti-regime news outlet

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR).^[55] According to local sources cited by SOHR, Iranian-backed militias began transferring weapons to residential areas in fear of a possible retaliation from US forces. The Islamic Resistance of Iraq targeted US forces stationed at al Tanf Garrison and Conoco Mission support site in eastern Syria on October 19, as CTP-ISW previously reported.^[56] US forces have targeted Iranian-backed militia weapons storage facilities in Syria in retaliation for strikes on US positions in Syria previously, most notably during the last escalation cycle between the United States and militias in March 2023.^[57]

LH and Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) arrived in al Mayadin, Deir ez Zor Province, Syria on October 19. LH militants were transferred from Idlib Province, Rif Dimashq Province, and Hatla, Deir ez Zor Province.^[58] Popular Mobilization Forces arrived in al Mayadin from Iraq the same day.^[59]

PMF supporters traveled to the Iraq-Jordan border near Trebil, Iraq to stage a sit-in in support of the Palestinian people.^[60] Sadrist Movement leader Moqtada al Sadr called for Iraqis to hold a sit in on the border with Palestine and remain “until the siege is lifted.”^[61] Jordanian authorities did not comment on any convoys traveling to the border; however, Jordanian security forces closed the al Karamah Border Crossing with the West Bank according to Iraqi Kurdistan-based Shafaq news.^[62]

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) spokesperson Nasser Abu Sharif stated that the potential for normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia motivated Hamas’ October 7 attack during an Iranian conference on the Israel-Hamas war in Qom on October 20.^[63] Sharif argued that the normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia would have dealt a devastating blow to the Palestinian cause. He also mentioned that many unspecified intra-Palestinian issues also “justified” the Al Aqsa Flood operation. Sharif further claimed that LH Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah is awaiting a simple “phone call” from resistance leaders before attacking Israel, consistent with Iranian and Axis of Resistance rhetoric about the potential expansion of the conflict since October 13.^[64] Sharif finally claimed that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has forbidden Palestinian groups from granting any concessions or retreating, consistent with CTP-ISW’s previous assessment that the Palestinian resistance is preparing for a prolonged conflict with Israel.^[65]

Iranian Friday prayer leaders echoed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s recent claim that the United States is responsible for Israeli actions against the Gaza Strip during their sermons on October 20. Khamenei accused the United States of determining Israel’s “current policy” vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip during a speech on October 17, as CTP-ISW previously reported.^[66] Mashhad Friday Prayer Leader Ahmad Alam ol Hoda emphasized that the United States, not Israel, is the “main perpetrator” of killings and bombings in the Gaza Strip.^[67] Varamin Friday Prayer Leader Mohsen Mahmoudi similarly claimed that the United States is “the root of all Israeli crimes.”^[68] Pardis Friday Prayer Leader Hossein Hosseini asserted that Israel is carrying out attacks against women, children, and hospitals in the Gaza Strip “under the heads of American statesmen.”^[69] This coordinated rhetoric from Friday prayer leaders suggests that Khamenei and his inner circle are directing this messaging campaign. Friday prayer leaders receive guidance for the content of their sermons from the Office of the Supreme Leader.

Iranian officials and media are criticizing US President Joe Biden’s October 18 visit to Israel and framing it as part of US-Israeli preparation for an Israeli ground invasion into the Gaza Strip. Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian described Biden’s visit as “provocative” during a meeting with his Lebanese counterpart Abdallah Bou Habib on the sidelines of the emergency Organization of Islamic Cooperation meeting in Jeddah on October 18.^[70] Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani similarly stated that Biden’s visit highlighted US plans to “complicate” the situation in the Middle East during a phone call with his Iraqi counterpart Thabet al Abbasi on October 20.^[71]

- State-run outlet IRNA claimed on October 20 that the purpose of Biden’s visit to Israel was to “strengthen” Israeli attacks against Hamas.^[72] Qods Friday Prayer Leader Hamza Mohammadi claimed on October 20 that Biden gave the Israeli government “the green light” for a ground invasion into the Gaza Strip.^[73] Regime outlets recirculated Western reporting on October 19 that Biden told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Washington is “fully in support” of a ground invasion.^[74]

Iranian officials have begun comparing Israel to ISIS and Hitler after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu labeled Hamas as “ISIS” and “the new Nazis” on October 17.^[75] Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian compared Israel to ISIS while claiming that Israel attacked a Greek Orthodox church in the Gaza Strip on October 20.^[76] Iranian Chief Rabbi Younes Hamami Lalehzar separately stated

that Israel cannot represent Judaism “just as ISIS cannot represent Islam” during an interview with English-language *Press TV* on October 20.[77] Passive Defense Organization Head Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali described Israel as “a new Hitler in the region” in a speech on October 20.[78] The above rhetoric is consistent with Iranian accusations since October 11 that Israel is committing war crimes and genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Iranian media recirculated Western and Syrian reporting on the October 19 Iranian-backed militant attacks on US military assets. State-controlled *Islamic Republic News Agency* recirculated the sUS Defense Department’s announcement that it had intercepted several Houthi missiles and drones on October 19.[79] The Iran-backed Houthis launched at least three land-attack cruise missiles and eight drones “potentially” targeting Israel.[80] IRGC-affiliated *Tasnim News Agency* recirculated Western and Syrian media reporting on Iranian-backed Iraqi militias targeting US forces at Ain al Asad Airbase, Anbar province, Iraq as well as the Conoco Mission Support Site in Syria.[81] The Islamic Resistance of Iraq fired three drones targeting the al Tanf Garrison, Syria and three one-way drones targeting Conoco Mission Support Site on October 19.[82] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias also launched an unspecified number of rockets targeting US forces at the Ain al Asad Airbase.[83]

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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 21, 2023

Iran Update, October 21, 2023

Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Amin Soltani, and Nicholas Carl

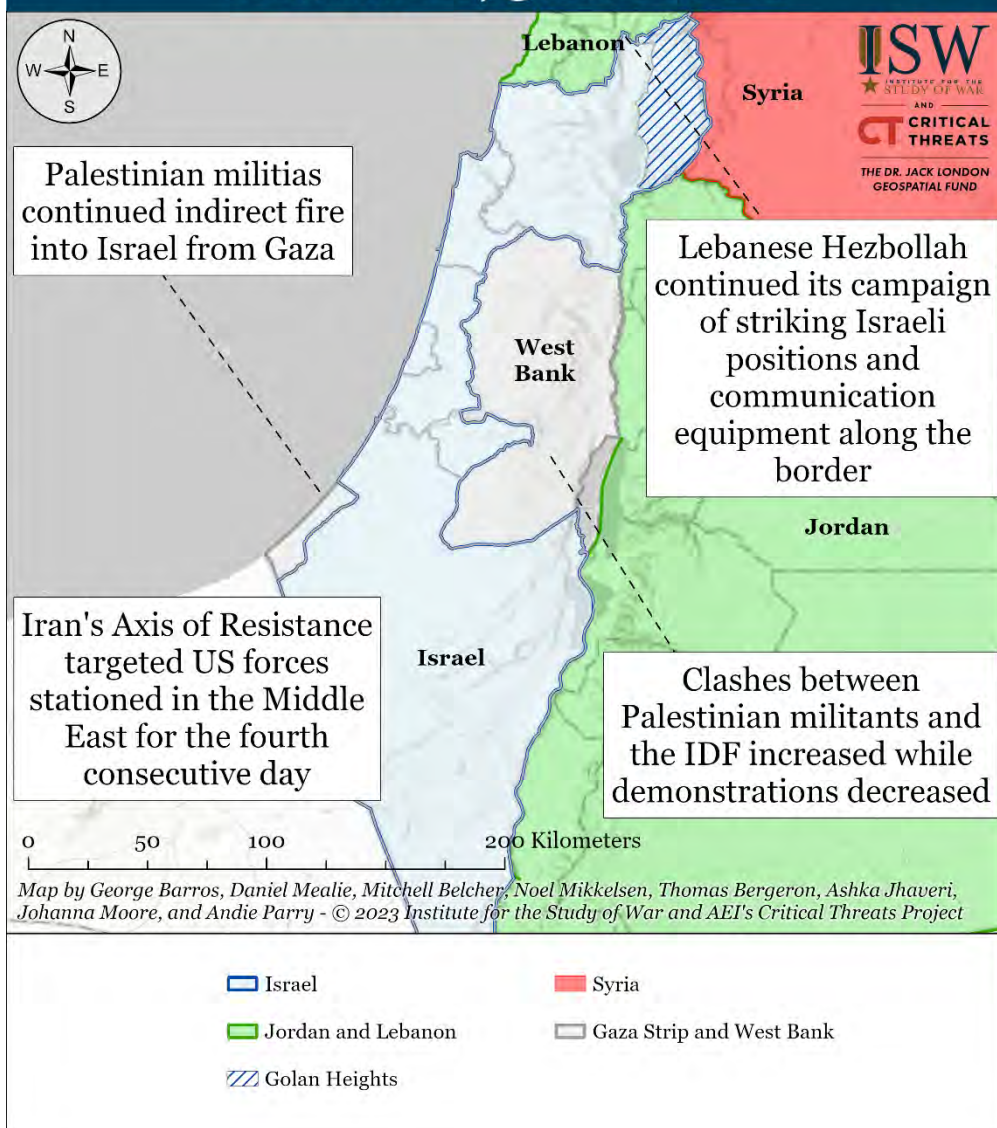
The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the 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. Palestinian militias continued indirect fire at their usual rate into Israel. These attacks and those throughout the war underscore the reality that the IDF is facing a loose coalition of several Palestinian militias rather than just Hamas.
2. Palestinian militants and Israeli forces continued to clash in the West Bank. Palestinian militants have increasingly used IEDs against Israeli forces since October 18.
3. Iranian-backed militants, including LH, conducted 11 attacks as part of its ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets, especially tanks. This campaign creates opportunities for further LH attacks into Israel and increases the risk of further escalation.
4. Israeli and LH officials and media suggested that fighting could intensify around the Israel-Lebanon border in the coming days, especially if the IDF conducts ground operations into the Gaza Strip.
5. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—conducted two separate one-way drone attacks on US positions in Iraq, marking the fourth consecutive day of attacks targeting US forces in the Middle East. Iranian-backed KH spokesperson Jaafar al Hussein announced that attacks on US forces will continue and at a higher pace. These attacks are part of the Iranian-led effort to deter the United States from providing meaningful support to Israel.
6. Iranian state media is continuing to push counter-narratives in response to the present Western and Israeli discourse.

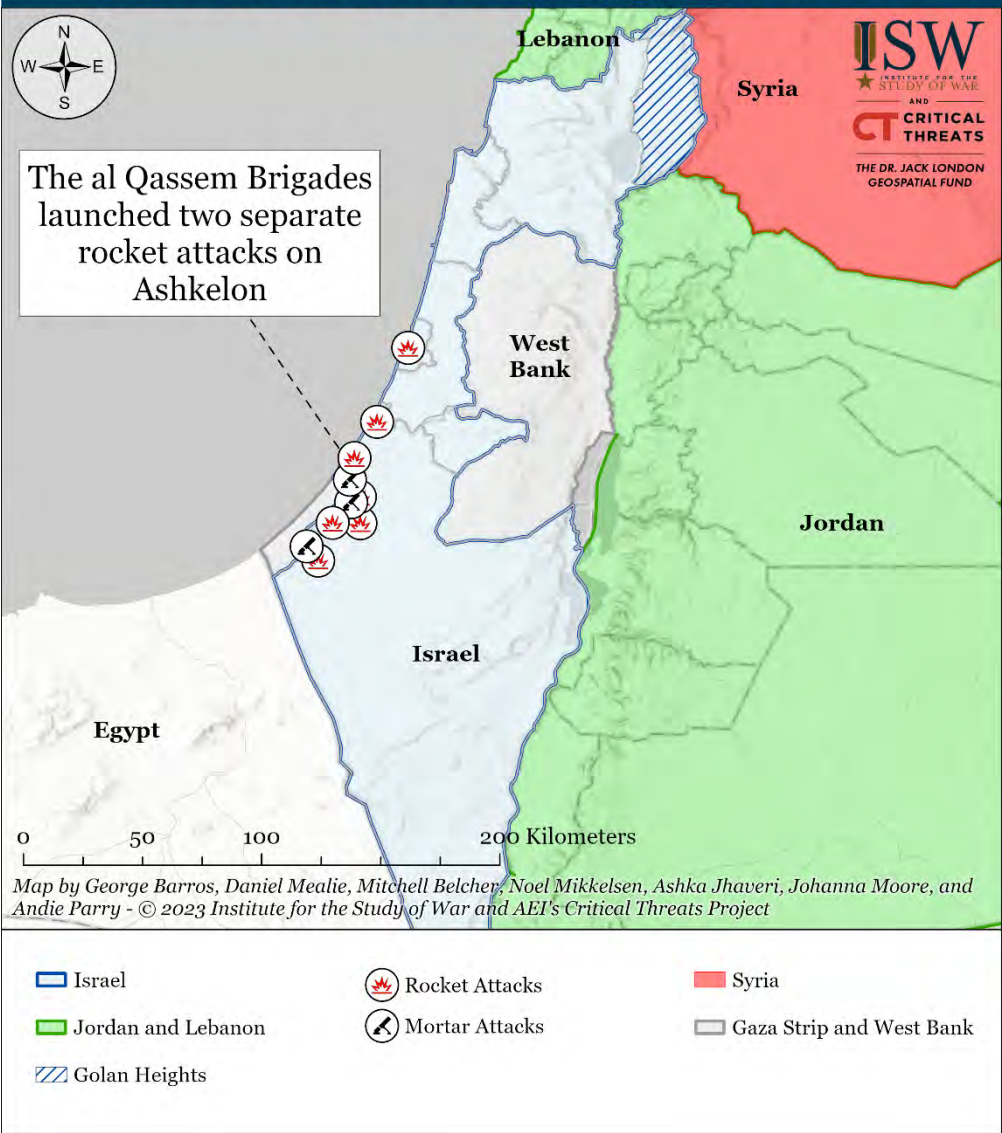
Israel-Hamas War as of October 21, 3:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip

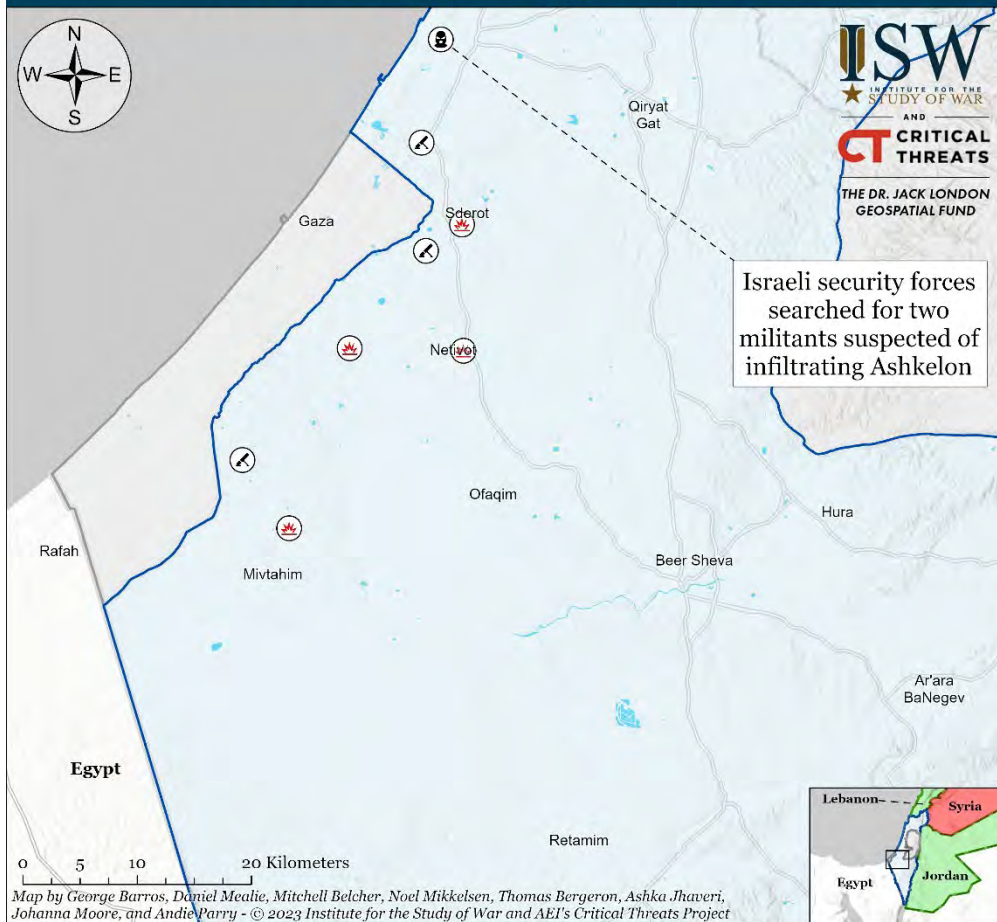
Palestinian militias continued indirect fire at their usual rate into Israel on October 21. These attacks continued to strike civilian and military targets. The al Qassem Brigades—the militant wing of Hamas—claimed ten rocket attacks^[1] The National Resistance Brigades—the militant wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine—claimed two rocket attacks.^[2] The al Quds Brigades—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—conducted one rocket attack.^[3] The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades—the militant wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—claimed two mortar attacks, marking the second time that CTP-ISW has recorded them launching attacks into Israeli territory since the war began.^[4] The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades claimed one mortar attack into Israeli territory on October 12.^[5] The attacks recorded on October 21 and throughout the war underscore the reality that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is facing a loose coalition of several Palestinian militias rather than just Hamas.

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 21, 3:00 PM ET



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

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 21, 3:00 PM ET



- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Israel | Rocket Attacks | Gaza Strip and West Bank |
| Jordan and Lebanon | Mortar Attacks | Syria |
| | Infiltration | |

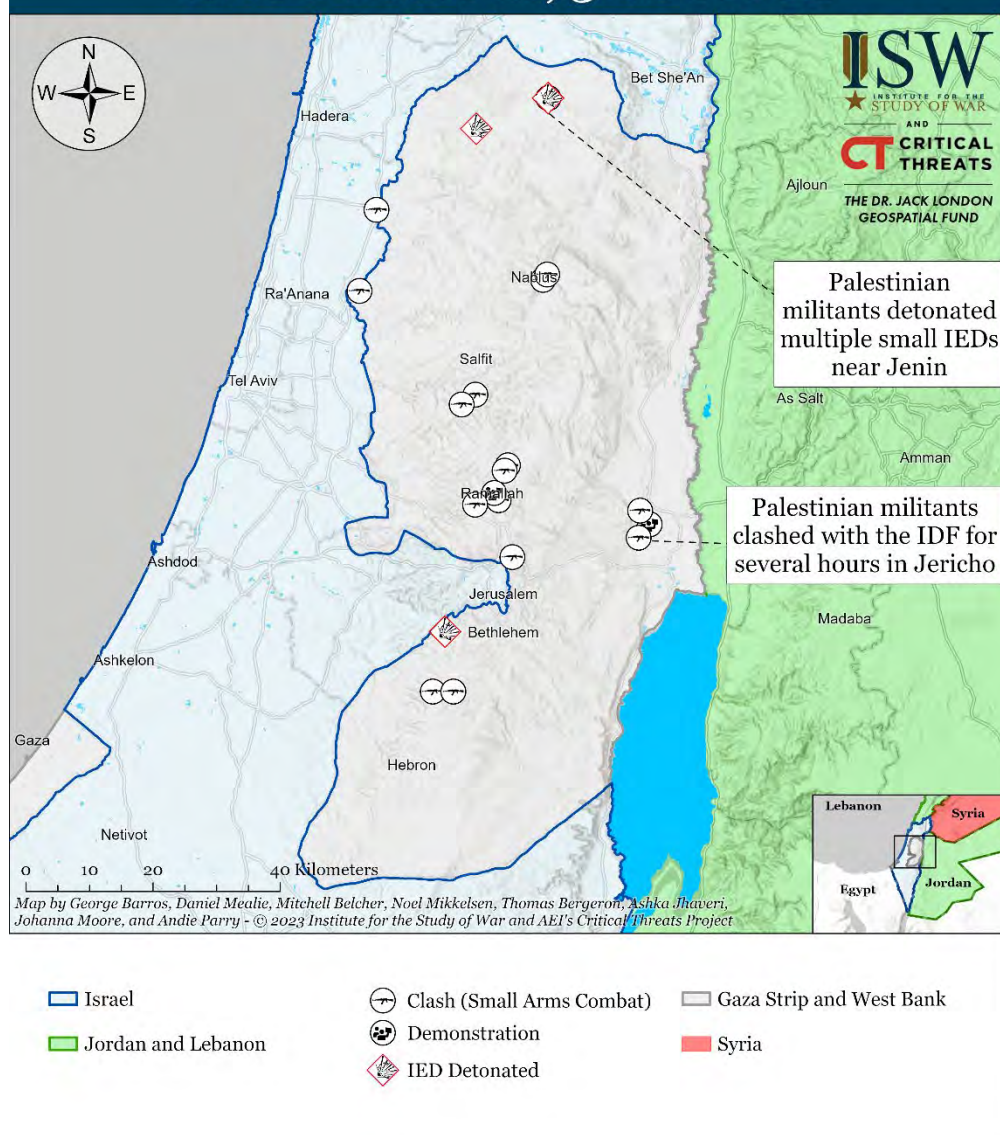
Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

The IDF published data on October 21 detailing the scale of Palestinian militia rocket attacks into Israel since the war began. The IDF reported that the militias have fired over 6,900 rockets from the Gaza Strip since October 7.[6] The IDF also reported that around 25 percent of the rockets fired on October 20-21 failed and fell short of Israeli territory—landing instead inside the Gaza Strip.[7]

West Bank

Palestinian militants and Israeli forces continued to clash in the West Bank on October 21.[8] CTP-ISW recorded 21 distinct clashes compared to 17 the previous day.[9] Unspecified militants detonated three IEDs targeting IDF checkpoints and vehicles throughout the West Bank.[10] Palestinian militants used IEDs in the West Bank on October 18 for the first time since the war began[11][12]. Palestinian militants have long used IEDs in the West Bank to attack Israeli forces and disrupt Israeli raids[12] CTP-ISW recorded three anti-Israel demonstrations in the West Bank on October 21—a significant decline from the previous day.[13] CTP-ISW recorded 12 demonstrations on October 20.[14] Hamas called for protests in support of the Gaza Strip across the world on October 22, which could facilitate civil unrest in the West Bank as well.[15]

Clashes in the West Bank as of October 21, 3:00 PM ET



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

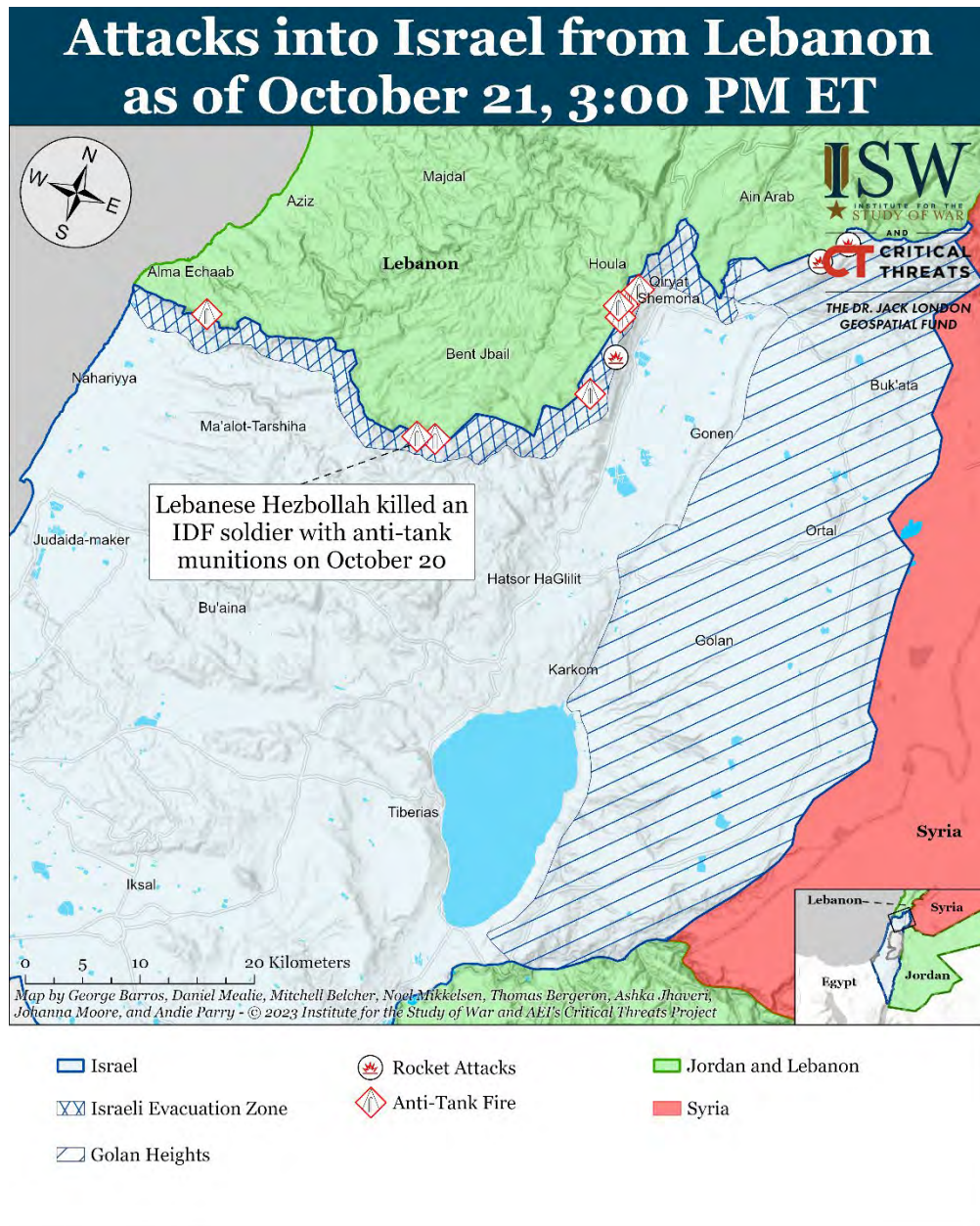
Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), conducted 11 attacks as part of its ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets, especially tanks.[16] The attacks targeted locations across the entire length of the Israel-Lebanon border and into the disputed Sheeba Farms. These attacks are consistent with the increased rate of LH attacks into Israel since October 15.[17] This campaign creates opportunities for further LH attacks into Israel and increases the risk of further escalation, as CTP-ISW previously noted.[18]

LH claimed five of the eleven attacks reported above, although the group is also likely responsible for three unclaimed anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) attacks into Israel. Israel responded to the attacks by striking several LH positions along the border as well as LH militants firing ATGMs into Israel.[19]

Israeli and LH officials and media suggested that fighting could intensify around the Israel-Lebanon border in the coming days, especially if the IDF conducts ground operations into the Gaza Strip. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant stated on October 21 that he “assume[s] that the challenge [there] will become greater [than it is now].”[20] Israeli media similarly suggested on LH could increase the

scope and range of its attacks in the coming days.[21] LH Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem separately warned on October 21 that the war could expand if "the enemy interferes further." [22]



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

Iran and Axis of Resistance

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—conducted two separate one-way drone attacks on US positions in Iraq on October 21, marking the fourth consecutive day of attacks targeting US forces in the Middle East.[23] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed eight attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria since October 18.[24] These attacks are part of the Iranian-led effort to deter the United States from providing meaningful support to Israel, as CTP-ISW previously assessed.[25] LH-affiliated media later published an article asserting that the recent Iranian-sponsored attacks on US positions are meant to prevent the United States from supporting Israel, confirming that assessment.[26]

- The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed a drone attack targeting US forces stationed at the Ain al Asad Airbase and reported that the drone "hit its target." [27] The group released a video showing the drone launch but did not include footage of any impact. [28] The video has since been circulated on Axis of

Resistance-affiliated media.[29] This is the third attack claimed by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq on the Ain al Asad airbase since October 18.[30]

- The Islamic Resistance in Iraq also conducted a one-way drone attack targeting US forces stationed at Erbil International Airport on October 21 and claimed the attack hit its intended target.[31] The group released footage of the drone launched toward the airport but again did not include footage showing any impact.[32] This is the first claimed attack on Erbil International Airport since the war began.



Iranian-backed Kataib Hezbollah (KH) spokesperson Jaafar al Hussein announced on October 20 that attacks on US forces will continue and at a higher pace.[33] Hussein placed full responsibility for Israeli airstrikes into the Gaza Strip on the United States and argued that the United States will bear the consequences. KH has been one of the more vocal Iranian-backed Iraqi proxies to threaten attacks on US forces in the Middle East since October 7. KH is also a member of the Islamic Resistance of Iraq.[34] **Iranian state media is continuing to push counter-narratives in response to the present Western and Israeli discourse.** IRGC-affiliated media published an article envisioning the “world after Israel” on October 21.[35] This reporting comes as Western and Israeli discourse have focused on what governance structure in the Gaza Strip would follow the removal of Hamas. CTP-ISW previously reported on how Iranian officials

have begun associating Israel with Adolf Hitler and ISIS in response to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu labeling Hamas as “the new Nazis” and “ISIS.”

[1] Sources available upon request

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[4] https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/36162 ; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/36160 ; <https://t.me/QudsN/316078>

[5] <https://t.me/QudsN/316078>

[6] <https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1715501756753367333>

[7] <https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1715715126127468730>

[8] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-18-2023> ; Sources available upon request.

[9] Sources available upon request.

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[14] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-20-2023>

[15] <https://hamas.ps/ar/p/18346>

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; <https://twitter.com/alishoeib1970/status/1715741464209056236> ; <https://central-media.org/36394/600/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%81-%D9%85%D9%88%D9%82%D8%B9-%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%A7>

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[18] <https://www.understandingwar.org/background/iran-update-october-20-2023>

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[24] Sources available upon request

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[27] <https://t.me/elamharbi/16>

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[30] sources available upon request

[31] <https://t.me/elamharbi/20>

[32] <https://t.me/elamharbi/22>

[33] <https://www.almanar.com.lb/11095053>

[34] <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/profile-islamic-resi...>

[35] <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14020729000278>

IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 22, 2023

Iran Update, October 22, 2023

Brian Carter, Andie Parry, Amin Soltani, and Nicholas Carl

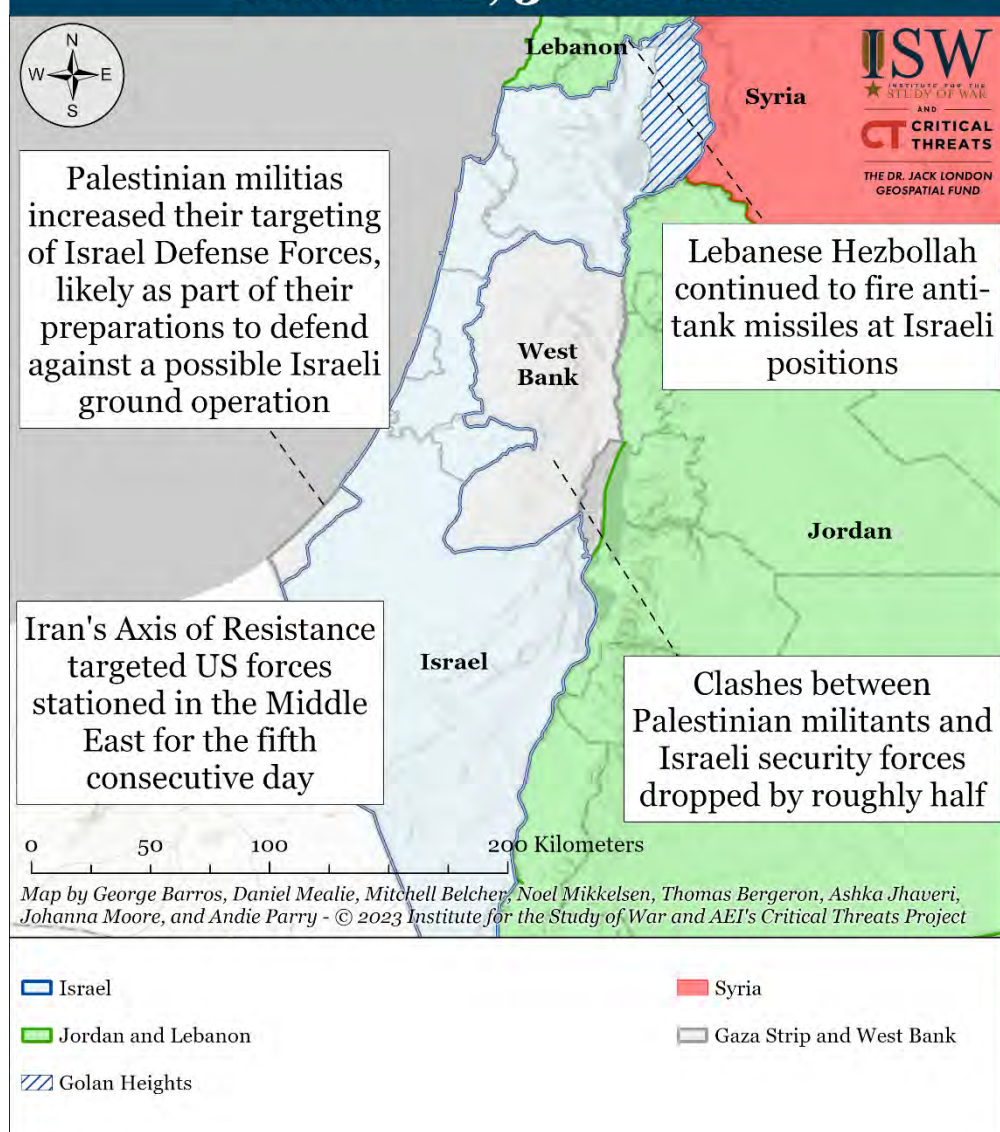
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Note: CTP and ISW have refocused the update to cover the Israel-Hamas war. The new sections address developments in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as noteworthy activity from Iran's Axis of Resistance. We do not report in 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. Palestinian militias continued attacks at their usual rate from the Gaza Strip into Israel. Palestinian militias increased their targeting of the Israel Defense Forces in these attacks, likely as part of their preparations to defend against a possible Israeli ground operation.
2. Clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces in the West Bank dropped by roughly half.
3. Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted 17 attacks as part of an ongoing attack campaign against Israeli forces and assets.
4. Iranian leaders have reached a consensus approving limited cross-border Lebanese Hezbollah attacks into Israel, according to Reuters. This report and others indicate that Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah are coordinating a carefully calibrated escalation to draw Israeli attention away from the Gaza Strip.
5. The Israel Defense Forces Air Force conducted airstrikes on the Damascus and Aleppo international airport runways. The Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry indicated that the airstrikes in Syria are part of an Israeli effort to prevent Iran from moving weapons into Syria and/or opening a front against Israel from there.
6. Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani arrived in Syria to monitor Iranian-backed militias on the Israel-Syria border, according to Israeli media. Ghaani previously warned Syrian President Bashar al Assad that Iran intends to use Syria as a second front if the war expands.
7. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—conducted a one-way drone attack on US forces at Ain al Asad air base in Iraq, marking the fifth consecutive day of attacks targeting US forces in the Middle East. These attacks are part of the Iranian-led effort to deter the United States from providing meaningful support to Israel.
8. The Houthis prime minister said that the Houthis will target Israeli ships in the Red Sea if Israel continues operations in the Gaza Strip after meeting with Palestinian militia officials in Sanaa, Yemen.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 22, 3:00 PM ET

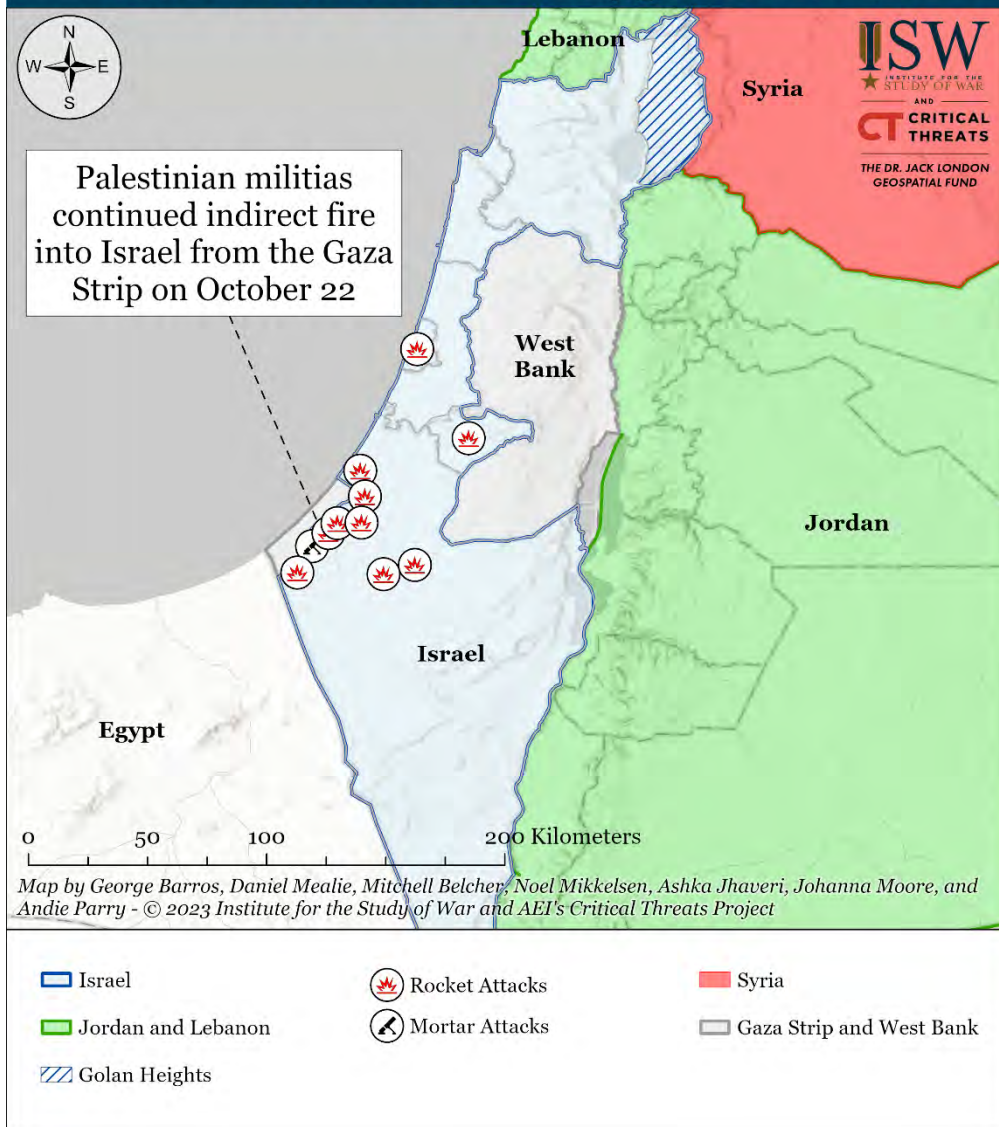


Gaza Strip

Palestinian militias continued attacks at their usual rate from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 22. The al Qassem Brigades— Hamas' militant wing—claimed responsibility for 12 direct and indirect fire attacks.^[1] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for another three rocket attacks.^[2] This rate of attacks is consistent with the rate that CTP-ISW has observed in recent days.

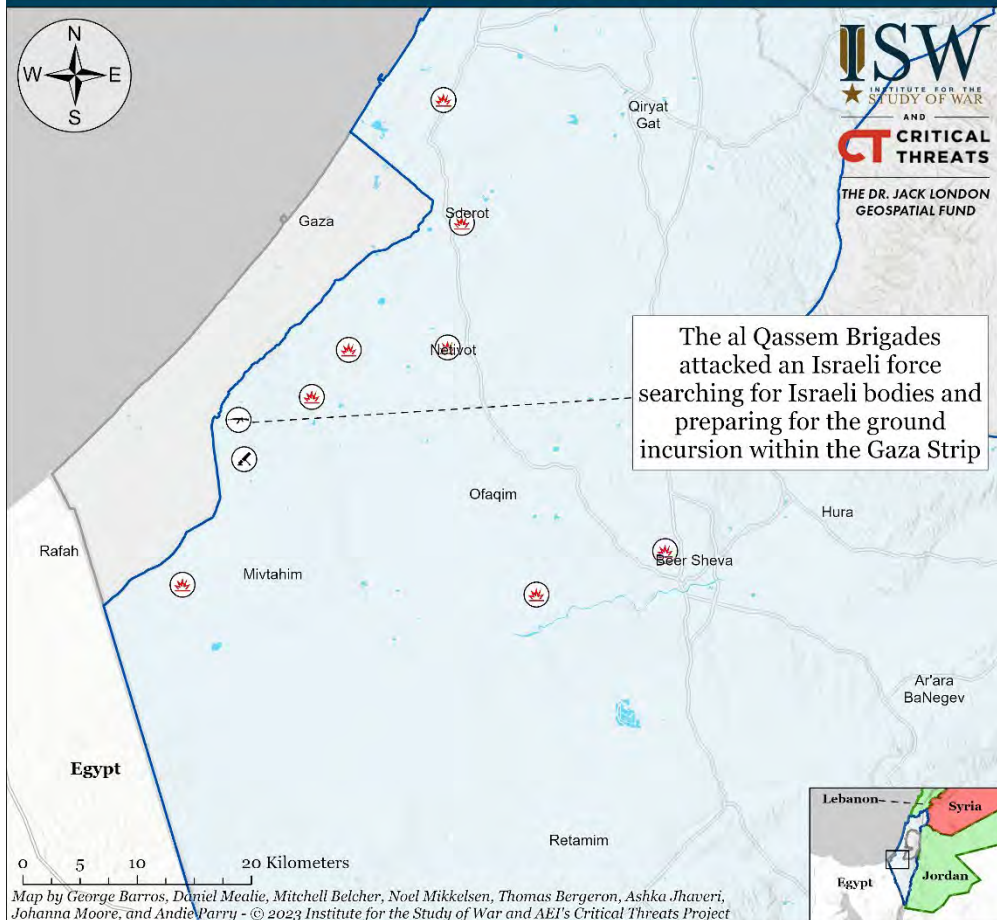
Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip increased their targeting of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), likely as part of their preparations to defend against a possible Israeli ground operation. Palestinian militias targeted a greater proportion of military targets relative to their overall attacks than at any point since October 18, when the militias targeted IDF positions near the Gaza Strip 15 times.^[3] Palestinian militias launched eight direct and indirect fire attacks targeting the IDF on October 22.^[4] They also fired mortars and rockets targeting Israeli cities and towns seven times. Al Qassem Brigades fighters separately killed one Israeli soldier and wounded three others during a firefight within the Gaza Strip.^[5] The IDF said that the Israeli forces were searching for the bodies of missing Israelis and preparing for Israel's ground operation.^[6]

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 22, 3:00 PM ET



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

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 22, 3:00 PM ET



- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Israel | Clash (Small Arms Combat) | Gaza Strip and West Bank |
| Jordan and Lebanon | Rocket Attacks | Syria |
| | Mortar Attacks | |

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

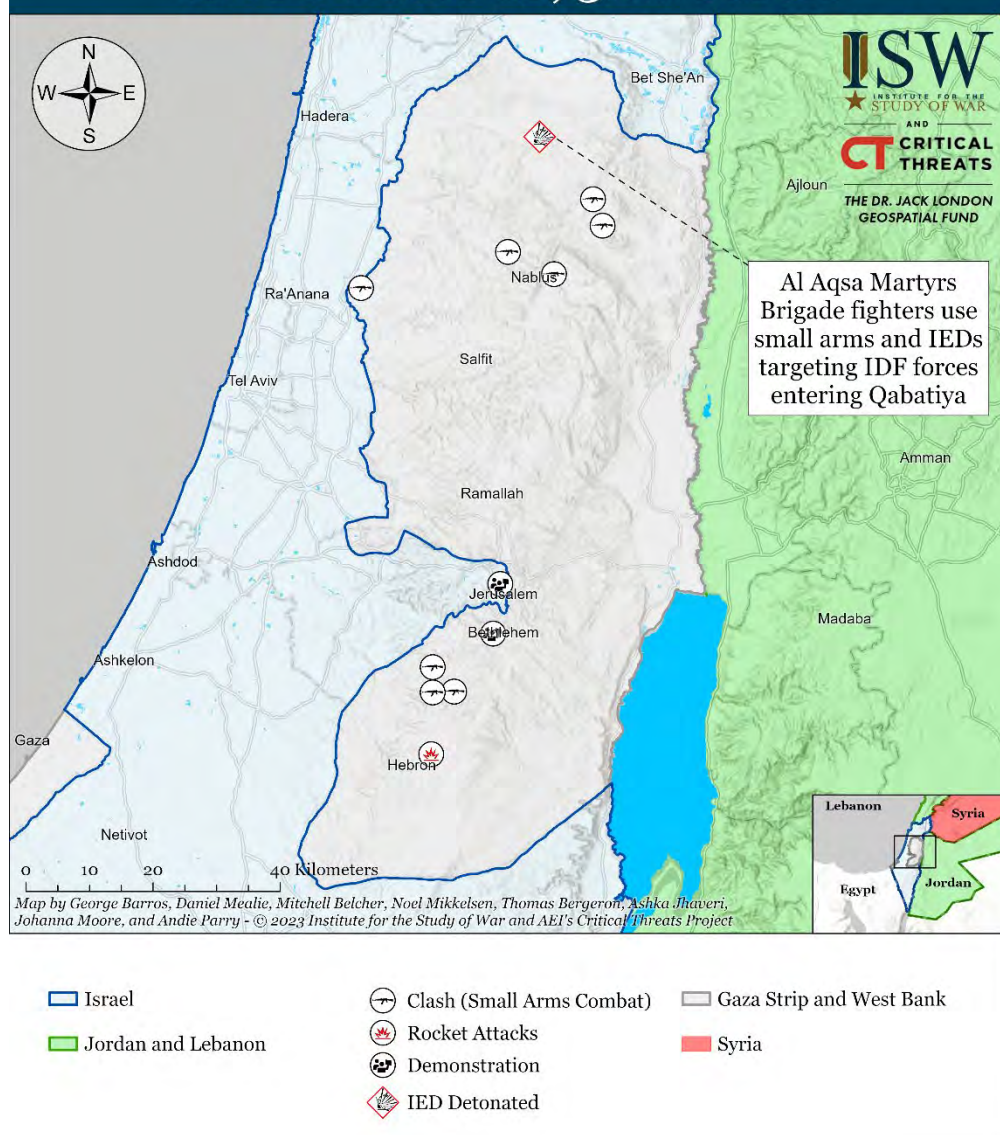
West Bank

Clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces in the West Bank dropped by roughly half on October 22.^[7] CTP-ISW recorded nine distinct clashes.^[8] Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade fighters clashed with Israeli forces in Qabatiya, close to Jenin, on October 22. The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade fighters used small arms and improvised explosive devices (IED) against Israeli forces.^[9]

CTP-ISW recorded only two demonstrations in the West Bank on October 22, which is consistent with the number of demonstrations on October 21.^[10] Hamas' calls for protests in support of the Gaza Strip across the world did not generate increased protests in the West Bank.^[11]

Israeli forces continued raids and arrests in the West Bank, arresting at least 46 Palestinians, including 27 active Hamas members and two PIJ military leaders, south of Jenin on October 22.^[12]

Clashes in the West Bank as of October 22, 3:00 PM ET



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

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), conducted 17 attacks as part of an ongoing attack campaign against IDF forces and assets on October 22.^[13] These attacks are consistent with the increased rate of Iranian-backed attacks into Israel since October 15. This campaign creates opportunities for additional Iranian-backed ground attacks into Israel and increases the risk of further escalation, as CTP-ISW previously noted.^[14] LH militants fired surface-to-air missiles at an IDF helicopter, marking the first use of air defense in Lebanon against the IDF since the start of the war.^[15] The IDF intercepted a drone crossing from Lebanon into Israel—the first attempted drone infiltration from Lebanon since October 20.^[16] The majority of attacks from Lebanon used anti-tank guided missiles against IDF forces and positions.^[17] Israeli forces struck five ATGM squads in southern Lebanon on October 22.^[18] The Israeli Defense Ministry expanded the civilian evacuation zone along the Israel-Lebanon border to encompass 14 additional towns.^[19] Israel previously evacuated towns within two kilometers of the border.^[20]

Several Iranian-backed militias are participating in the attack campaign against Israeli forces from southern Lebanon. The al Qassem Brigades fired multiple barrages of rockets at northern Israeli towns on October 15

and 19.[21] Saraya al Quds claimed four of its fighters have died in southern Lebanon since October 7.[22] LH has almost certainly approved these attacks given the extent to which LH controls southern Lebanon and coordinates with the other Iranian-backed groups operating there.

Iranian leaders have reached a consensus approving limited cross-border LH attacks into Israel, according to Reuters.[23] Two LH-affiliated individuals also told Reuters that the LH military activity around northern Israel is meant to "keep Israeli forces busy but not open a major new front." CTP-ISW cannot verify the accuracy of this report. It is consistent, however, with the IDF spokesperson stating that Iran has instructed LH to escalate against Israel and thereby impose pressure on the IDF while it prepares for ground operations into the Gaza Strip.[24] These reports indicate that Iran and LH are coordinating a carefully calibrated escalation to draw Israeli attention away from the Gaza Strip.

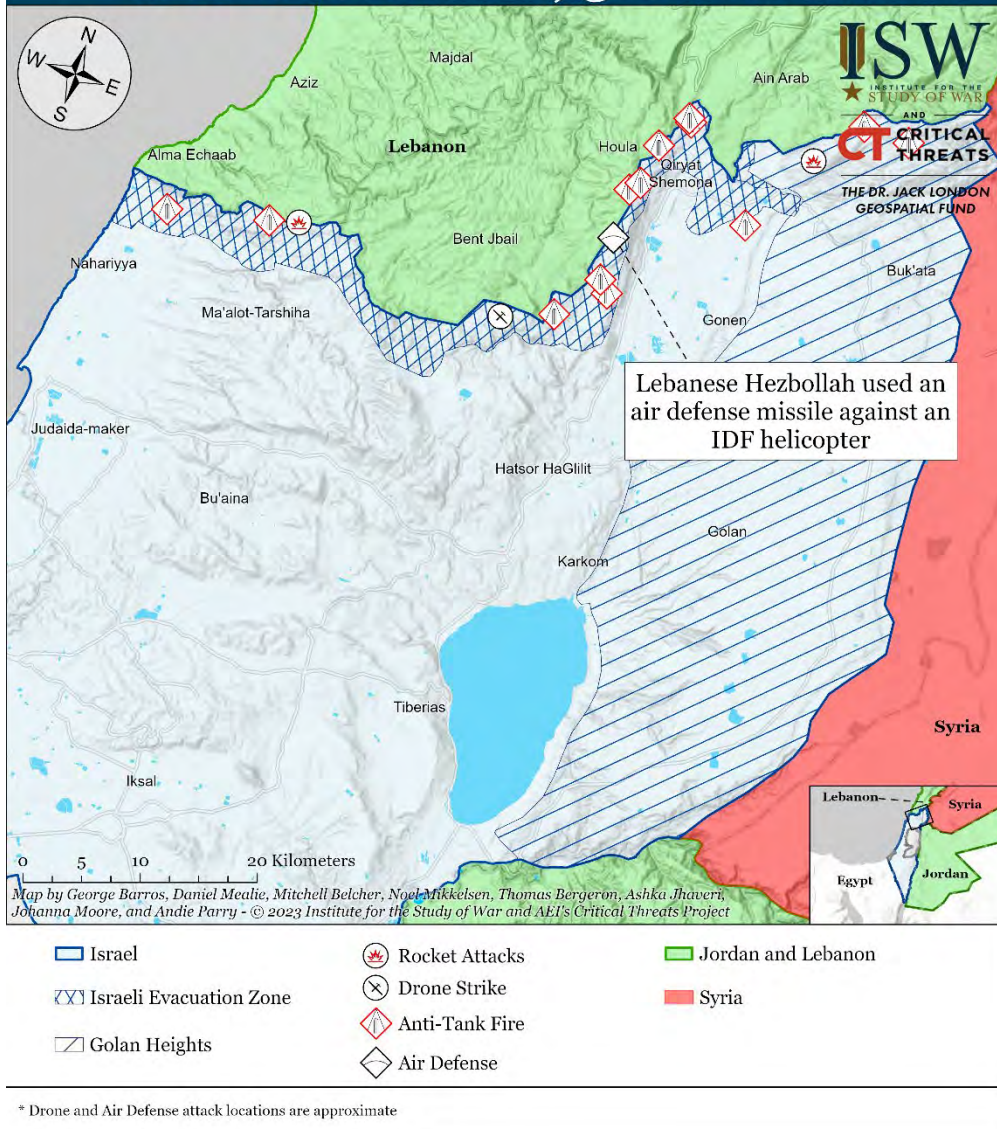
The IDF Air Force conducted airstrikes on the Damascus and Aleppo international airport runways on October 22.[25] Israel previously conducted multiple airstrikes on Damascus and Aleppo international airports on October 12 and 14, disrupting critical nodes through which Iran funnels military equipment and personnel into the Levant.[26] A senior official at the Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry indicated that the airstrikes in Syria are part of an Israeli effort to prevent Iran from moving weapons into Syria and/or opening a front against Israel from there.[27] The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has long used commercial airliners affiliated with the Iranian regime for military transports to Syria throughout the civil war there.

Unidentified militants conducted an indirect fire attack into the Golan Heights following the IDF airstrikes on the Damascus and Aleppo international airports, possibly as symbolic retaliation. Israeli forces intercepted the fire.[28] This is a consistent response pattern to Israeli airstrikes into Syria since the war began. Unidentified militants launched indirect fire into the Golan Heights following the previous airstrikes.[29]

IRGC Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani arrived in Syria on October 21 to monitor Iranian-backed militias on the Israel-Syria border, according to Israeli media.[30] CTP-ISW cannot independently verify this report. Iranian-backed militias have concentrated in southern Lebanon and southwestern Syria in recent days as part of Iran-led preparations for the war to expand into a regional conflict.[31] An Iranian state-affiliated journalist previously claimed that Ghaani warned Syrian President Bashar al Assad on October 15 that Iran intends to use Syria as a second front if the Israel-Hamas war expands.[32] An unspecified Iranian intelligence official claimed that Iran would start a "limited" ground operation from Syria into the Golan Heights and notably not from Lebanon if the situation escalates to protect LH.[33]

The rhetoric of the Lebanese prime minister and foreign minister diverged on the issue of Lebanon's possible future involvement in the Israel-Hamas war. Prime Minister Najib Mikati expressed concern but indicated that the situation is returning to normal and that the Lebanese government is making every effort to keep harm away from Lebanon.[34] Lebanese Foreign Affairs Minister Abdallah Bou Habib contrastingly expressed concern about the outbreak of war in southern Lebanon based on Israeli actions in the Gaza Strip during an interview with al Jazeera.[35] Bou Habib called for a ceasefire but warned that Israel will in the event of a larger war erupting suffer far more losses than it did in the 2006 Lebanon-Israel war.

Attacks into Israel from Lebanon as of October 22, 3:00 PM ET

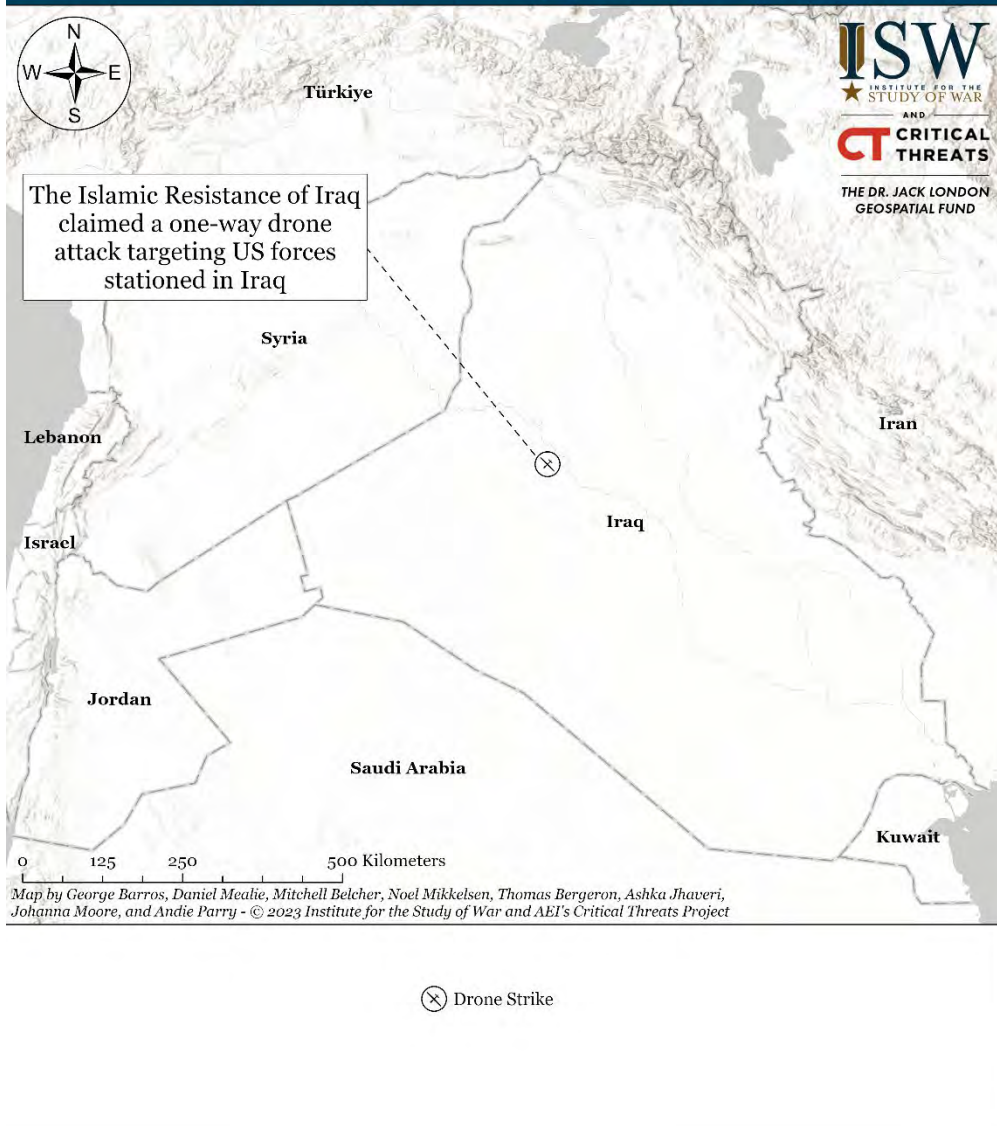


Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Iran and Axis of Resistance

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—conducted a one-way drone attack on US forces at Ain al Asad air base in Iraq on October 22, marking the fifth consecutive day of attacks targeting US forces in the Middle East.[36] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed nine drone and rocket attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria since October 18.[37] Four of those attacks targeted the Ain al Asad air base.[38] These attacks are part of the Iranian-led effort to deter the United States from providing meaningful support to Israel, as CTP-ISW previously assessed.[39] Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah threatened additional attacks against US positions on October 20.[40]

Attacks on US Bases in the Middle East as of October 22, 3:00 PM ET



The Houthi prime minister said on October 22 that the Houthis will target Israeli ships in the Red Sea if Israel continues operations in the Gaza Strip after meeting with Palestinian militia officials in Sanaa, Yemen on October 21.^[41] The Houthi prime minister also acknowledged on October 22 that the United States intercepted Houthi drones and missiles headed toward Israel over the Red Sea on October 19.^[42] He claimed that some of the missiles and drones still hit their targets.^[43] CTP-ISW has not observed any indications of a Houthi drone or missile strike within Israel, however. The Houthi prime minister is a southern Yemeni.^[44] He is not part of the Houthi Movement's inner circle, which is almost exclusively made up of northern Yemenis.^[45]

Axis of Resistance Red Lines

Members of Iran's Axis of Resistance have articulated their thresholds for intervening in support of Hamas' war in Israel



 New red line

Actor	Threat	Stated Red Line
Iran	Conduct missile attacks into Israel from Iran, Lebanon, and Yemen and send fighters from Syria into Israel	Israel attacks Iran
	Direct its proxies to attack US positions in Iraq and Syria	United States refreezes \$6 billion to Iran
Lebanese Hezbollah	Enter the war	Israel conducts a ground operation into Gaza
Badr Organization	Attack US military positions	The United States intervenes in the war
Kataib Hezbollah	Attack US military positions	The United States intervenes in the war
Kataib Seyyed ol Shohada	Intervene in the war	The United States intervenes in the war
Houthi Movement	Conduct drone and missile strikes	The United States intervenes in the war
	Target Israeli ships	Israeli operations in Gaza continue

IRGC-affiliated media is conducting an information operation asserting that Israel does not care about Israeli hostages in the Gaza Strip. *Tasnim News Agency* recirculated a Hamas claim that Hamas sought to transfer two hostages to Israel but that Israeli officials refused to accept their delivery on October 22.[46] *Tasnim* similarly claimed on October 21 that Israel's "clandestine goal" is to "cause the killing of captive Israelis," according to "informed sources." [47] *Tasnim* published the article in both Persian and English, which suggests that the messaging is intended for both domestic and global audiences.

- [1] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28695> <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/stat...> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28694> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28693> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28692> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28691> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28690> ; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28689>
- [2] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16427>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16426>
- [3] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28620>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/131367>; ht...
- [4] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28693>; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28692>; ...
- [5] <https://t.me/AymanGouda/5784>; <https://t.me/maymun5/54441>; <https://t.me...>
- [6] <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1716143649363210452?s=20>; <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1716142893704855971?s=20>
- [7] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-18-2023> ; Sources available upon request.
- [8] <https://t.me/AymanGouda/5782>; <https://t.me/maymun5/54352>; <https://t.me/AymanGouda/5779>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132164>; <https://twitter.com/qudsn/status/1715910692010606625>; <https://www.wafa...https://www.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/82414>; <https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1716081855902929132>; https://t.me/mihwar_almugawama/36273; <https://www.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/82479>; <https://t.me/AymanGouda/5787>
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- [10] [www.wafa dot ps/Pages/Details/82475](https://www.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/82475); [https://www.wafa dot ps/Pages/Details/82451](https://www.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/82451)
- [11] [https://hamas dot ps/ar/p/18346](https://hamas.ps/ar/p/18346)
- [12] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1715997053317194153>; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1715997065195520206>

- [13] Sources available upon request.
- [14] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-20-2023>
- [15] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1715840128604574173>; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1715840131809132864>
- [16] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1716012728773468550>
- [17] Sources available upon request.
- [18] <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1716147039766024264>
- [19] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1715953385336135983>
- [20] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1713796865815134364>
- [21] <https://algassam> dot ps/arabic/%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%85/5928/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%B7%D9%84%D9%82-%D8%B1%D8%B4%D9%82%D8%A9-%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AE%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%BA%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86 ; <https://algassam> dot ps/arabic/%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%85/5873/%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%B5%D9%81-%D9%85%D8%BA%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A8%D8%AA%D9%8A-%D8%B4%D9%84%D9%88%D9%85%D9%8A-%D9%88-%D9%86%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%88%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%B7%D9%87%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%AA%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A820-%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AE%D8%A7
- [22] <https://twitter.com/Artanis04/status/1716098704388575460> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16425> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16428> ; <https://twitter.com/QalaatM/status/1715802192181858578>
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- [29] <https://twitter.com/nourabohsn/status/1712511236187857080> ; <https://t.me/almanarnews/130686>
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- [33] <https://damascusv> dot com/archives/54562

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[44] <https://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/2016/10/6/%D8%A8%D9%86-%D8%AD%D8%A8%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%A3%D9%8A%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A4%D8%B3-%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9>

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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 23, 2023

Iran Update, October 23, 2023

Amin Soltani, Peter Mills, Kathryn Tyson, Ashka Jhaveri, Brian Carter, and Johanna Moore

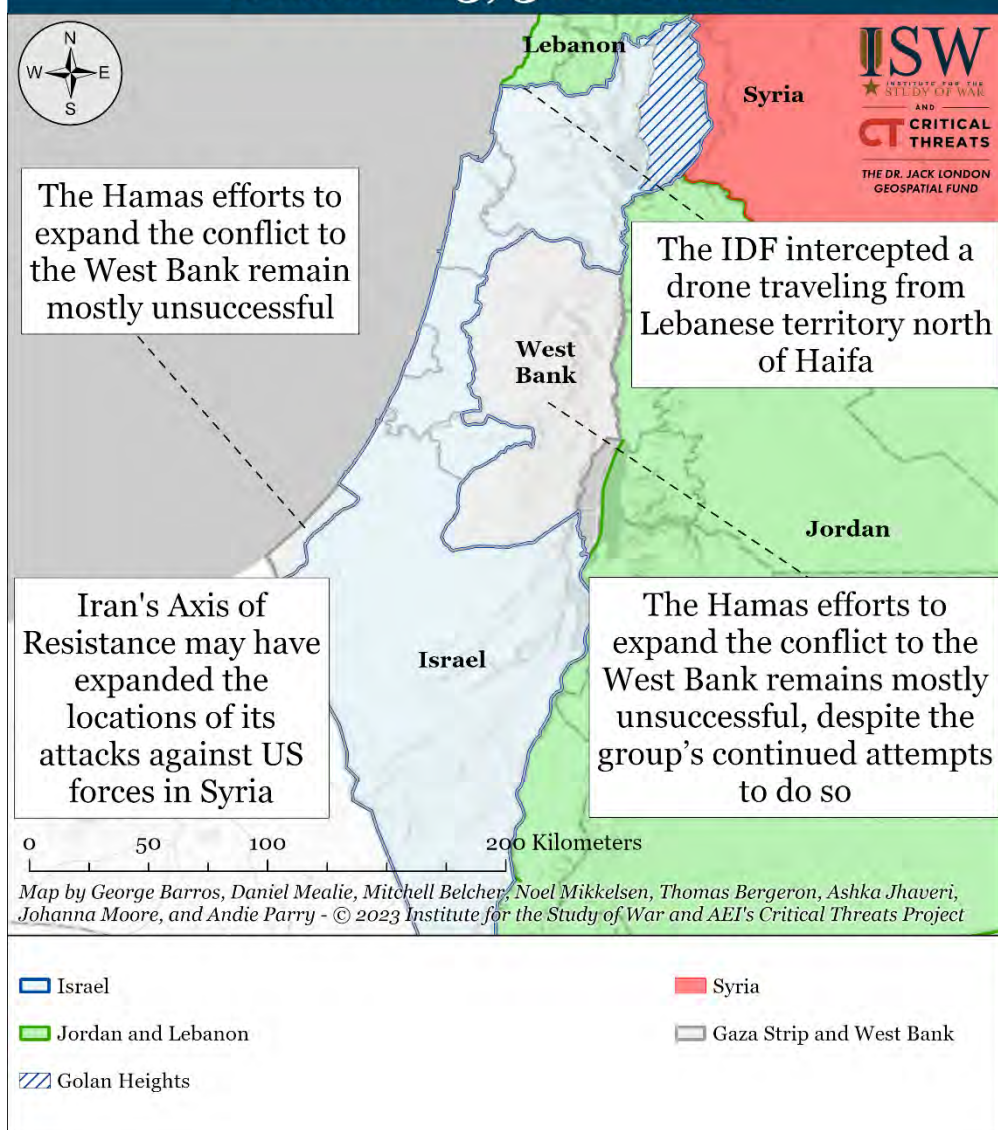
The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the 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, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

Key Takeaways:

1. Palestinian militias continued attacks at their usual rate from the Gaza Strip into Israel while IDF airstrikes targeted Palestinian militant groups affiliated with Hamas in Gaza.
2. Militants in southern Lebanon and Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted nine attacks as part of an ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets. The IDF also intercepted two drones traveling from Lebanese territory north of Haifa.
3. The Islamic Resistance of Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—may have expanded the locations of its attacks against US forces in Syria.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 23, 3:00 PM ET



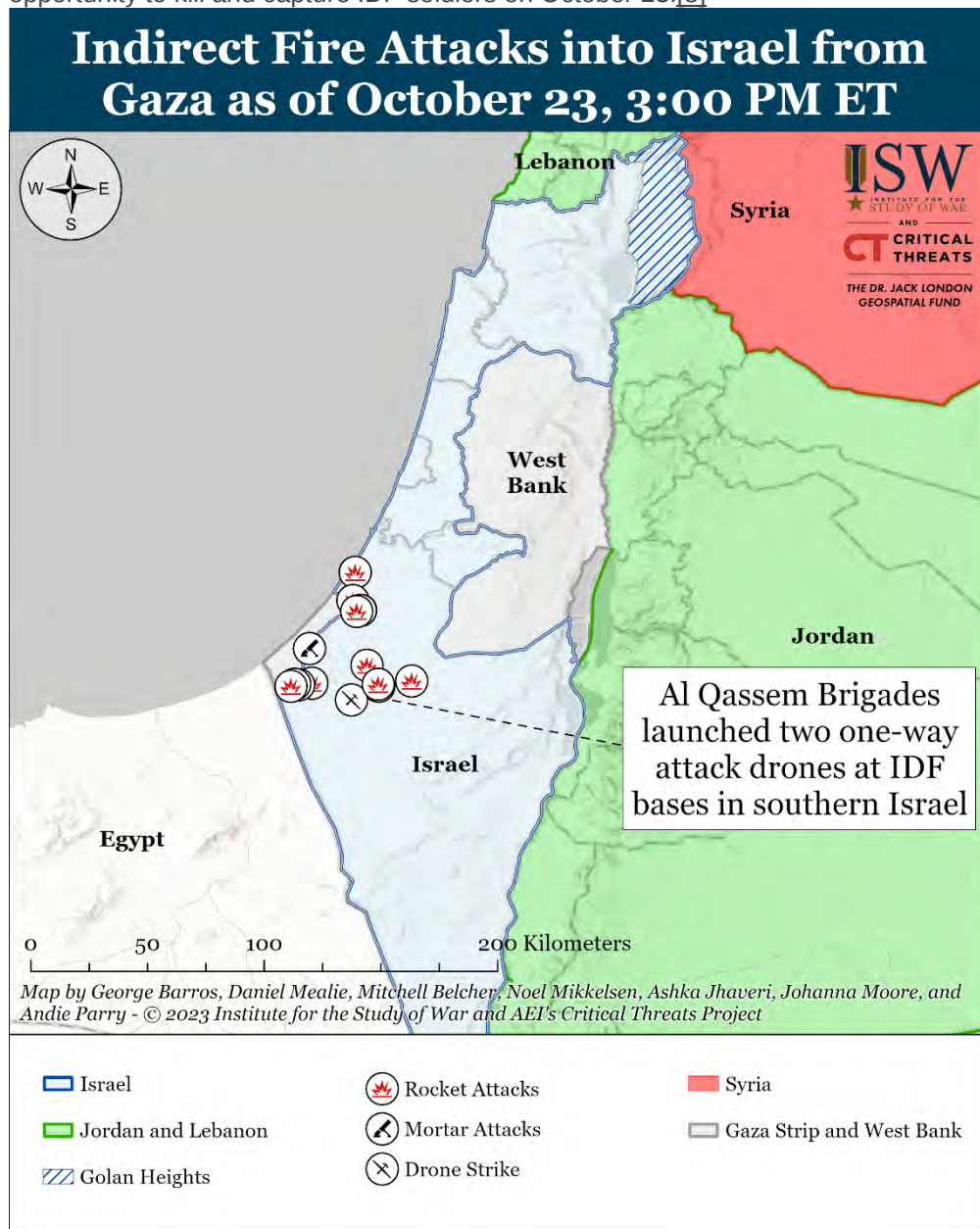
Gaza Strip

Palestinian militias continued attacks at their usual rate from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 23. The al Qassem Brigades— Hamas' militant wing— claimed responsibility for six direct and indirect fire attacks, including two drone attacks, on IDF military positions in southern Israel.[1] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)— claimed responsibility for another five mortar and rocket attacks.[2] The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades—the militant wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine— claimed mortar fire targeting IDF units.[3]

Hamas is trying to use hostages as leverage to allow humanitarian aid and fuel into the Gaza Strip.

Hamas claimed that it released two elderly hostages for humanitarian reasons after mediation from Egypt on October 23.[4] Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal said Hamas would release civilian hostages if Israel reduced its airstrikes into the Gaza Strip.[5] *The Wall Street Journal* reported that negotiations over releasing a group of 50 hostages broke down after Israel demanded that Hamas release all hostages as a prerequisite for permitting fuel to enter the Gaza Strip.[6] Hamas could use fuel and other aid supplies to support its efforts to defend against an IDF ground operation. Hamas still holds more than 200 hostages.[7] Hamas

spokesman Abdul Latif al Qanou framed a possible IDF ground invasion into the Gaza Strip as an opportunity to kill and capture IDF soldiers on October 23.[8]

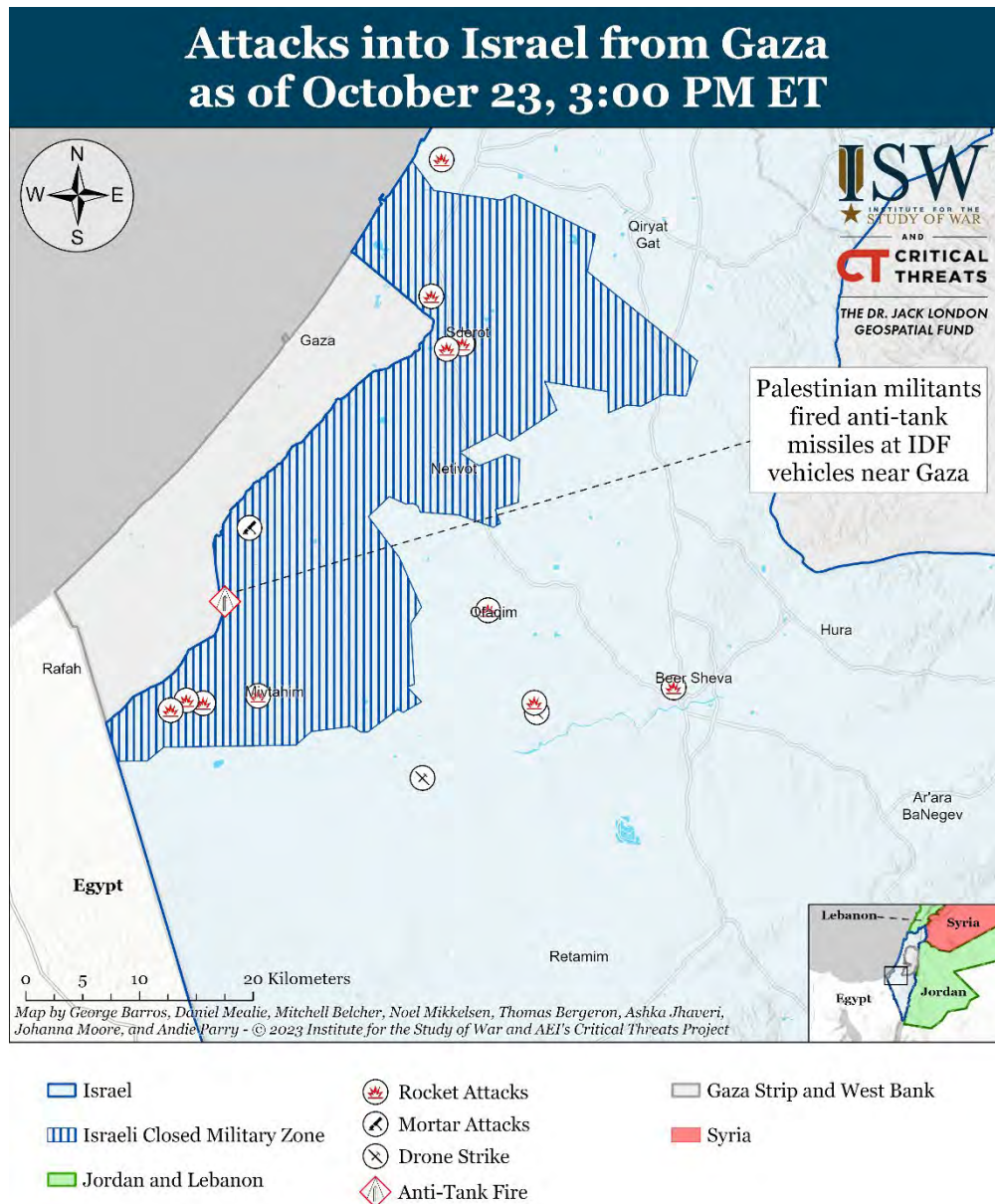


Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

IDF Major General Michael Edelstein stated that Israel has evidence of Iranian involvement in Hamas' October 7 attack.[9] Edelstein stated that Iran assisted Hamas with training in the Gaza Strip but refused to elaborate further.[10] Iranian officials have invited Hamas militants to training camps in Iran in addition to assisting the group in manufacturing missiles and rockets.[11] Iran has developed smuggling routes across the Levant to transfer weapons and rocket manufacturing material to Hamas and evade Israeli interdiction. CTP-ISW previously assessed that Iran would likely provide material and financial support to its proxies to fight Israel rather than get directly involved in the Israel-Hamas war.[12]

IDF airstrikes continue to target Palestinian militias allied with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade announced on October 23 that the commander of its Rafah Brigade died during the ongoing war with Israel.[13] IDF airstrikes previously killed a commander affiliated with Saraya al Quds and the head of the military wing of the Popular Resistance Committee in Rafah on October 12 and 19,

respectively.[14] CTP-ISW previously reported on October 21 that the IDF faces a loose coalition of Palestinian militant groups in the Gaza Strip—rather than just Hamas.[15]



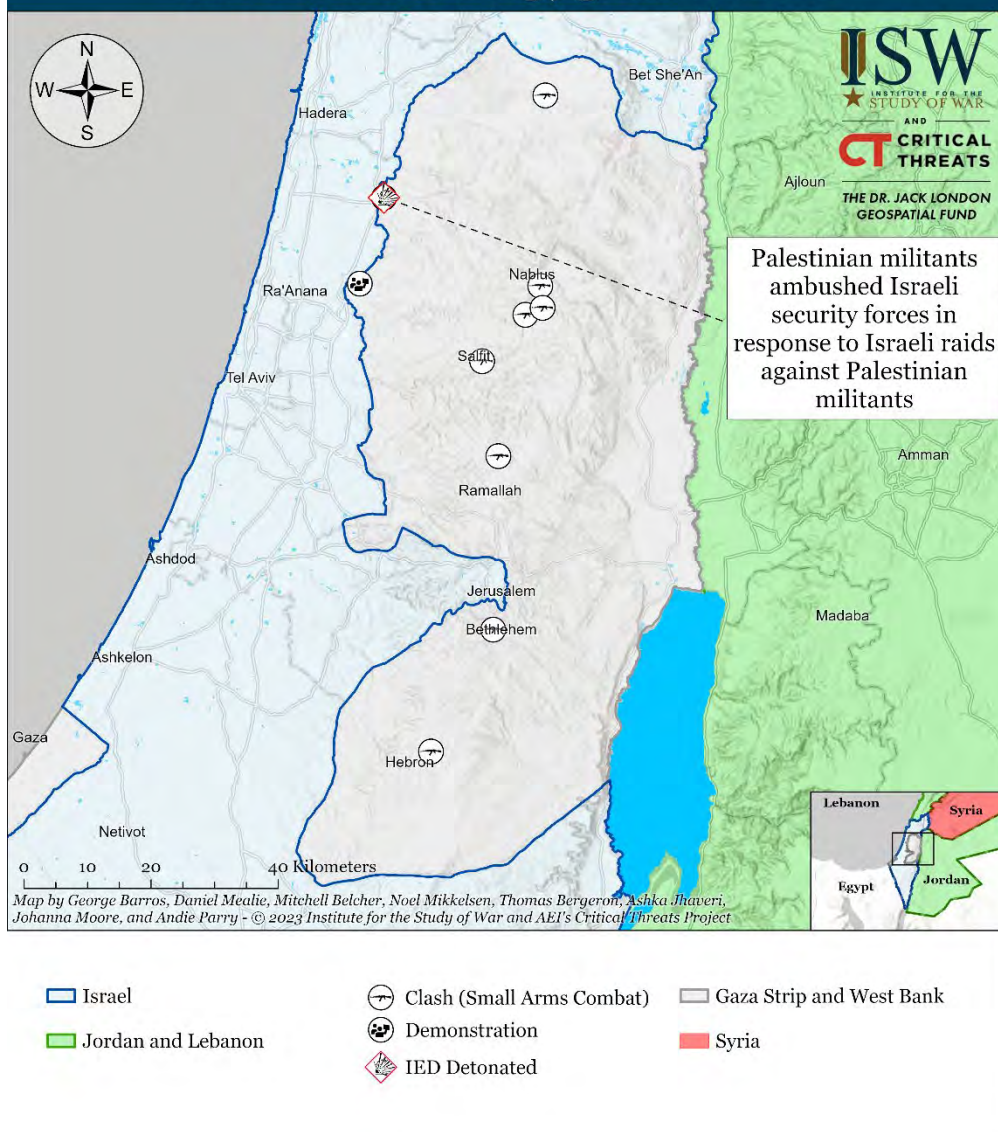
Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

West Bank

Hamas's efforts to expand the war to the West Bank remain mostly unsuccessful. CTP-ISW only recorded one demonstration on October 23 after a high of 11 demonstrations on October 20.[16] The rate of clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces in the West Bank is consistent with the number of clashes on October 22, after the rate dropped by half from October 21 to 22.[17] CTP-ISW recorded nine distinct clashes.[18]

Palestinian militants ambushed Israeli forces in response to Israeli raids against Palestinian militants. Tulkarm Brigades fighters used improvised explosive devices (IED) and small arms to attack Israeli forces in Tulkarm during an Israeli ground operation.[19] Other Palestinian militants fired small arms targeting Israeli forces during raids in Bethlehem and Jazloun IDP camp.[20]

Clashes in the West Bank as of October 23, 3:00 PM ET



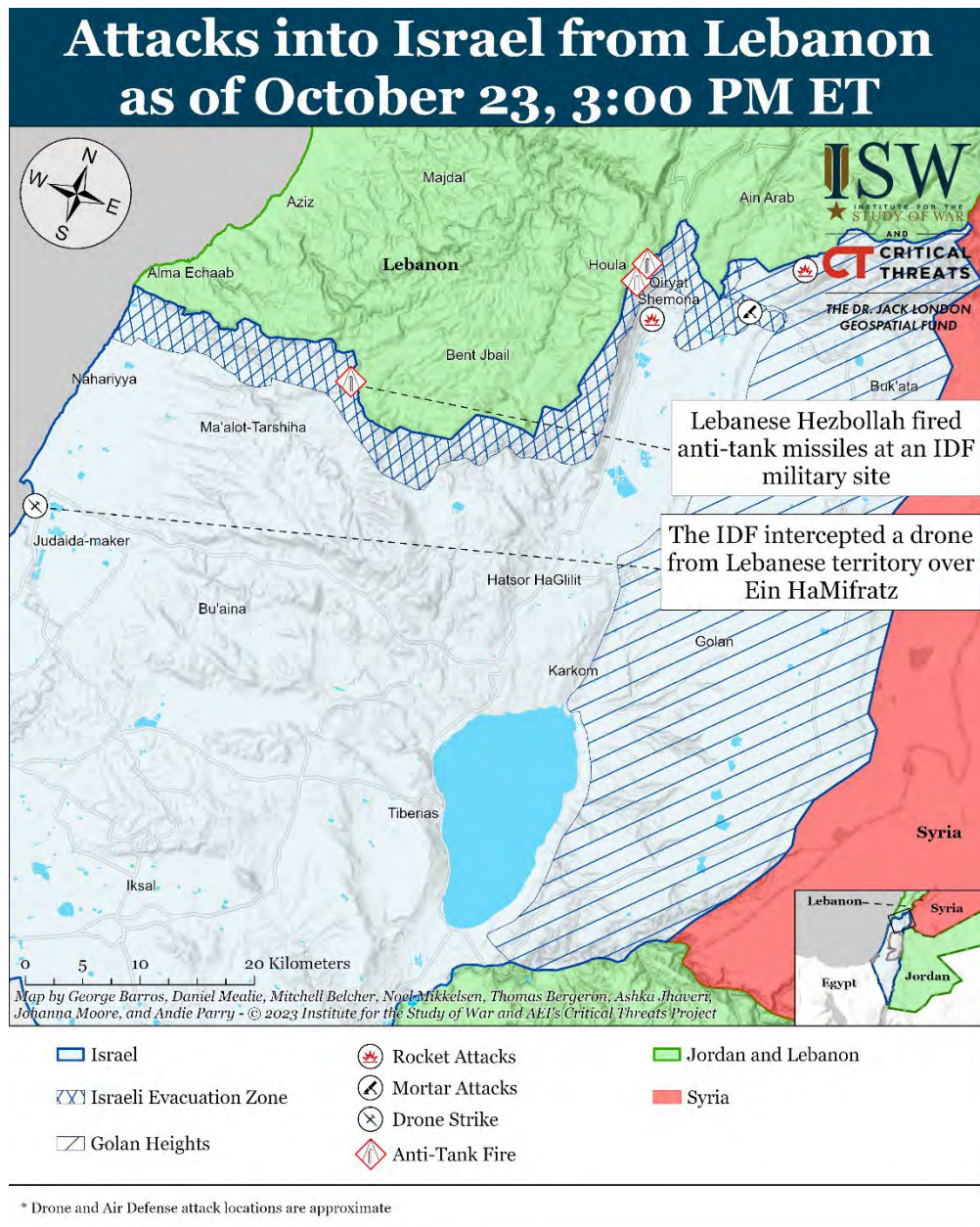
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and marches in the West Bank.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), conducted nine attacks as part of an ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets. LH claimed responsibility for attacking four IDF positions along the northern Israeli border.^[21] Attacks on Israeli towns and military positions continued along the entire border and into the disputed Sheeba Farms.

The IDF intercepted a drone traveling from Lebanese territory north of Haifa.^[22] CTP-ISW has observed nine instances of drones flying into northern Israeli territory and three in Haifa Province since October 7. It is unclear whether any of the drones are armed or meant for surveillance. Haifa is one the most critical business centers of Israel and the port handles nearly 50 percent of Israel's freight volume.^[23] Independent analysts have noted that Iran is especially interested in threatening the petrochemical facilities in Haifa given that the spread of fumes could maximize casualties.^[24] The IDF furthermore maintains several military sites in the vicinity of Haifa.^[25]

The LH-affiliated Lebanese Resistance Brigades announced the death of two of its members during unspecified duties for the first time since October 7.[26] The Lebanese Army, in coordination with the UNIFIL, retrieved the bodies from the outskirts of Kfarshouba north of Shebaa Farms.[27] LH Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah proclaimed the creation of the brigade in 1997. The group enlisted primarily non-Shia Lebanese with a shared commitment to Lebanon and its unity and national defense.[28] Several Iranian-backed militias, including Hamas and PIJ, are participating in the attack campaign against Israeli forces from southern Lebanon. LH almost certainly permits attacks from southern Lebanon given the extent to which LH controls southern Lebanon and coordinates with the other Iranian-backed groups operating there.



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

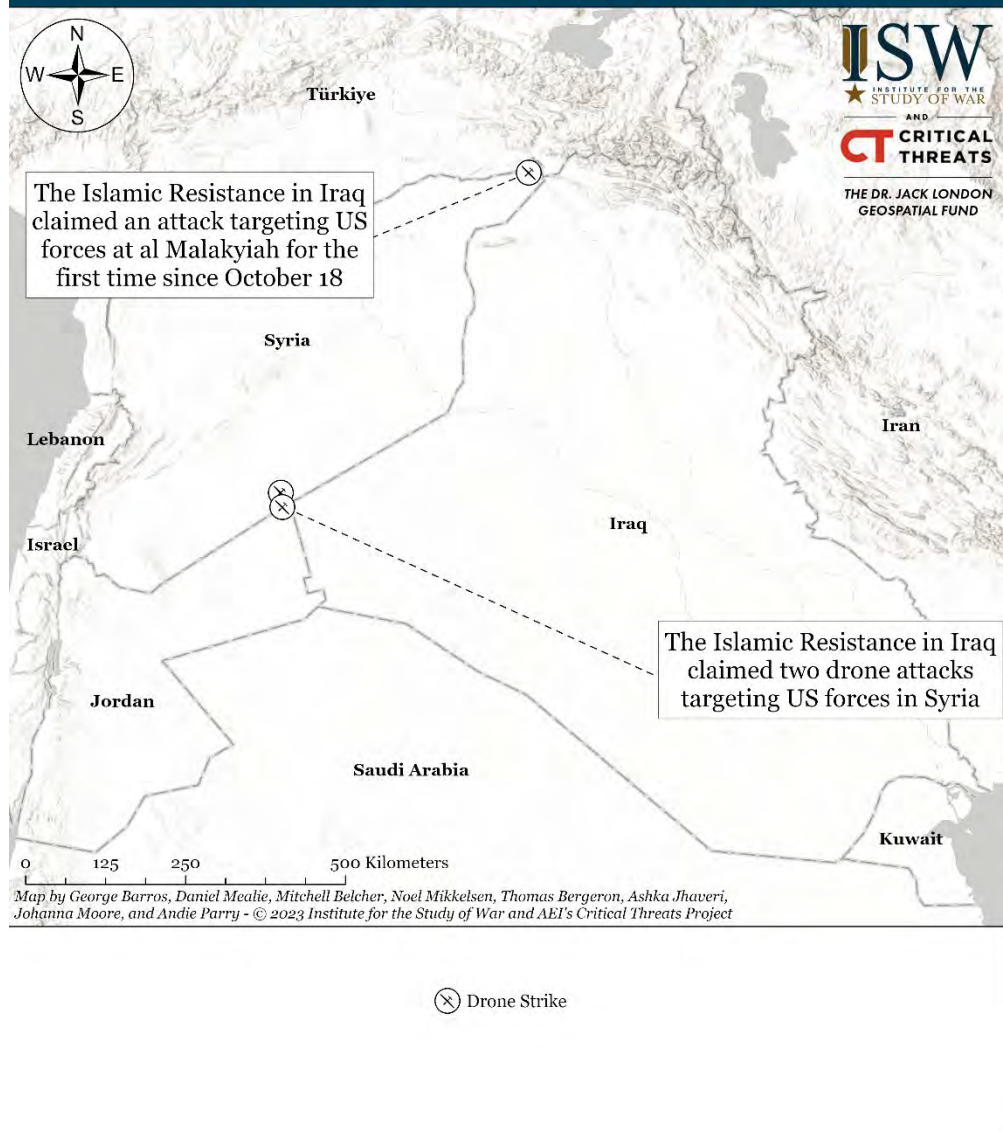
Iran and Axis of Resistance

The Islamic Resistance of Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—expanded the locations of its attacks against US forces in Syria on October 23. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed two one-way drone attacks targeting US forces in Syria, marking the sixth consecutive day of attacks targeting US forces in the Middle East. The Islamic Resistance of Iraq has claimed 11 drone and rocket attacks on US

forces in Iraq and Syria since October 18. These attacks are part of the Iranian-led effort to deter the United States from providing meaningful support to Israel, as CTP-ISW previously assessed.[29]

- The Islamic Resistance of Iraq claimed that it fired two drones targeting US forces at the al Tanf Garrison and al Rukban camp in eastern Syria on October 23.[30] The Islamic Resistance of Iraq last targeted al Tanf Garrison on October 19.[31] The group said that the drones “hit their targets” and released a video of the attack.[32] US Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder confirmed that there was an attempted drone attack on al Tanf Garrison that did not cause any injuries to US personnel.[33] Ryder said that US defense systems at al Tanf Garrison intercepted two drones, possibly referring to the attack on al Rukban.[34] Al Tanf Garrison is approximately 18 kilometers from al Rukban.
- The Islamic Resistance of Iraq claimed a one-way drone attack targeting US forces at al Malikiyah military base in northeastern Syria on October 23.[35] This attack marks the first time the Islamic Resistance of Iraq claimed that it targeted US forces at al Malikiyah. The group said that the drones “hit their targets.” US Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder did not confirm the attack on Malikiyah but said that the United States is still conducting a “comprehensive overview” of the October 23 drone attacks.[36]

Attacks on US Bases in the Middle East as of October 23, 3:00 PM ET



Hundreds of Iranian-backed foreign fighters have deployed to border areas with Israel, according to a report from the anti-Syrian regime outlet Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) on October 23. Unspecified SOHR sources said that hundreds of Iranian-backed fighters from Iraq, Syria, and the Afghan Fatemiyoun Division have deployed to the border areas near the Golan Heights along the southwestern Syrian border since October 21.[37] CTP-ISW has tracked the movement of Iranian-backed militants to southwestern Syria since the war began on October 7.[38]

Iranian officials and media are continuing their attempts to deter an Israeli ground operation into the Gaza Strip while also attempting to reassure their domestic and Axis of Resistance audiences that such an operation will fail. IRGC-affiliated Tasnim News Agency outlined the “significant challenges” that Israel will face in conducting a ground operation into the Gaza Strip, highlighting Hamas’ anti-tank capabilities.[39] Iranian state media similarly argued that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s senior advisers fear Hamas and further outlined several “challenges” facing Israeli ground operations into the strip, including declining public support, weakened relations with the Arab world, a high military death toll, and the potential for a geographic expansion of the conflict.[40] IRGC Deputy Commander Brigadier General Ali Fadavi similarly warned that Israel would suffer a “disgraceful” defeat at the hands of the Palestinian resistance were it to enter the Gaza Strip during an interview IRGC-affiliated Fars News Agency.[41]

- Israeli, anti-regime, and Axis of Resistance-affiliated media reported that Fadavi warned that Iran would conduct missile strikes on Haifa “if necessary.”[42] Iranian state media did not report this aspect of Fadavi’s statements, concealing the direct Iranian threat to Israel. This is consistent with CTP-ISW’s previous assessment that Iran seeks to avoid a direct confrontation with Israel and would likely provide material and financial support to its proxies rather than get directly involved in the Israel-Hamas war.[43]
- Iranian officials have repeatedly threatened to strike Haifa and Tel Aviv during previous periods of tension with Israel. President Ebrahim Raisi, for example, threatened in April 2023 to “destroy” the two Israeli cities were Israel to provoke Iran.[44]

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian is continuing to engage in political coordination with Palestinian militia leaders. Abdollahian held separate telephone conversations with Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh and PIJ Secretary General Ziyad al Nakhalah on October 22.[45] Abdollahian discussed Iranian efforts to support Palestine and halt Israeli “crimes” in the Gaza Strip—consistent with previous Iranian official rhetoric since October 13.[46] Both Abdollahian and the Palestinian militia leaders condemned US support for Israel—also consistent with their previous rhetoric since October 13. Abdollahian met with senior Hamas officials, including Haniyeh, in Doha between October 14 and 15.[47] Abdollahian visited Qatar after concluding a diplomatic tour of Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria.[48] CTP-ISW assessed that the tour was part of an Iranian effort to coordinate politically with senior leaders of Axis of Resistance vis-à-vis the Israel-Hamas war.[49]

Iranian Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani discussed the October 22 Israeli strikes on the Damascus and Aleppo international airports with his Syrian counterpart Lieutenant General Ali Mahmoud Abbas on October 23.[50] Ashtiani argued that Israel seeks to send a message that it is capable of delivering serious military responses on all fronts to cover up its actual “fragility.” Ashtiani also argued that Israel is committing “political suicide” by conducting its attacks on the Gaza Strip—consistent with previous Iranian rhetoric since October 13.[51]

[1] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28711>; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28712>; ...<https://t.me/qassambrigades/28709>; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/36370; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16434>; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28710>; https://twitter.com/no_itsmyturn/status/1716413762608017871; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/36374; https://twitter.com/ignis_fatum/status/1716413762608017871; <https://t.me/...>

[2] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16427>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16426>

[3] <https://t.me/kataebabuali/10434>

[4] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28717> ; <https://twitter.com/AmichaiStein1/status/1716531385828086178> ; <https://twitter.com/YWNReporter/status/1716518102551175344>

[5] <https://twitter.com/AmichaiStein1/status/1716510024363606471>

[6] <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/talks-to-release-hostages-held-up-...>

[7] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/23/efforts-to-free-gaza-hosta...>

[8] Source available on request.

[9] <https://news.sky.com/story/israel-says-it-has-evidence-of-iranian-involv...> ; <https://twitter.com/dpatrikarakos/status/1716450830356721842?s=20>

[10] <https://twitter.com/dpatrikarakos/status/1716450830356721842?s=20> ; <https://news.sky.com/story/israel-says-it-has-evidence-of-iranian-involv...>

[11] <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/investigations/us-investigating-whether-ira...>

[12] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-16-2023>

[13] <https://t.me/AymanGouda/5788>

[14] <https://twitter.com/AuroraIntel/status/1712384534992548247> ; https://twitter.com/no_itsmyturn/status/1714898999184879848

[15] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-21-2023?mkt...>

[16] https://twitter.com/Qudsn_Brk/status/1716471128187703800

[17] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-22-2023>; Sources available upon request.

[18] <https://t.me/almanarnews/132397>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132389>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132384>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132388>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132384>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132379>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132395>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132342>; <https://t.me/newpress1/55439>; <https://twitter.com/qudsn/status/1716349461604016622>; <https://twitter.com/qudsn/status/1716329834001907810>; <https://t.me/newpress1/55447>; <https://twitter.com/qudsn/status/1716360581861494864>; <https://twitter.com/qudsn/status/1716369139365773807>; <https://twitter.com/qudsn/status/1716369139365773807>; <https://twitter.com/qudsn/status/1716384174842556838>; <https://twitter.com/qudsn/status/1716403055896211820>

[19] <https://t.me/almanarnews/132397>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132389>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132384>

[20] <https://t.me/newpress1/55439>; <https://twitter.com/qudsn/status/1716349461604016622>; <https://twitter.com/qudsn/status/1716329834001907810>

[21] <https://t.me/almanarnews/132338>; <https://twitter.com/alishoeib1970/status/1716458408176398336>

[22] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1716439617723895846>

[23] <https://www.cruisemapper.com/ports/haifa-port-182?month=2023-10#:~:text=...>

[24] <https://english.alarabiya.net/features/2020/11/30/Why-is-Iran-targeting-...>

[25] <https://israel-alma.org/2023/09/20/the-evolving-role-of-the-israeli-navy...>

[26] <https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/301126-two-resistance-brigades-members-killed-by-israeli-shelling>

[27] <https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/301126-two-resistance-brigades-members-killed-by-israeli-shelling>

[28] <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/hizb-allahs-lebanese-resistance-brigades/>

[29] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-22-2023>

[30] https://twitter.com/war_noir/status/1716482131948372098; <https://twitter.com/ScharoMaroof/status/1716427665953931510>

[31] <https://t.me/maymun5/53731>

[32] https://twitter.com/bedou_int/status/1716479239703162990

[33] <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/3566081/pent...>

[34] <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/3566081/pent...>

[35] https://twitter.com/Tammuz_Intel/status/1716446999791206461

[36] <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/3566081/pent...>

[37] <https://www.syriahr.com/en/314883/>

[38] <https://deirezzor24.net/%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%82%D9%84-%D8%A3%D9%81/>;

[39] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/08/01/2973041>

[40] <https://www.irna.ir/news/85266625> ; <https://www.irna.ir/news/85268344>

[41] <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14020801000177>

[42] https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/36373 ; <https://www.almayadeen.net/news/politics/الثورة-حرس-اجبيه-من-حاسما-دا-ستلقى-غزة-إسرائيل-اجتاحت-إذا> ; <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-769720> ; <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202310231347>

[43] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-16-2023> ; <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-18-2023>
[44] <https://www.ipost.com/breaking-news/article-739527>
[45] <https://mfa.ir/portal/NewsView/732315> ; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/08/01/2976689> ; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2023/10/23/2976726>
[46] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-13-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-14-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-15-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-16-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-17-2023> ; <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-18-2023> ; <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-19-2023>
[47] www.mfa.ir/portal/NewsView/731493
[48] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-12-2023> ; <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-15-2023>
[49] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-12-2023> ; <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-15-2023>
[50] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2023/10/23/2976624> ; <https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14020801000626>
[51] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-13-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-14-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-15-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-16-2023> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-17-2023> ; <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-18-2023> ; <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-19-2023>

IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 24, 2023

Iran Update, October 24, 2023

Brian Carter, Peter Mills, Andie Parry, Amin Soltani, Annika Ganzeveld, Johanna Moore, and Nicholas Carl

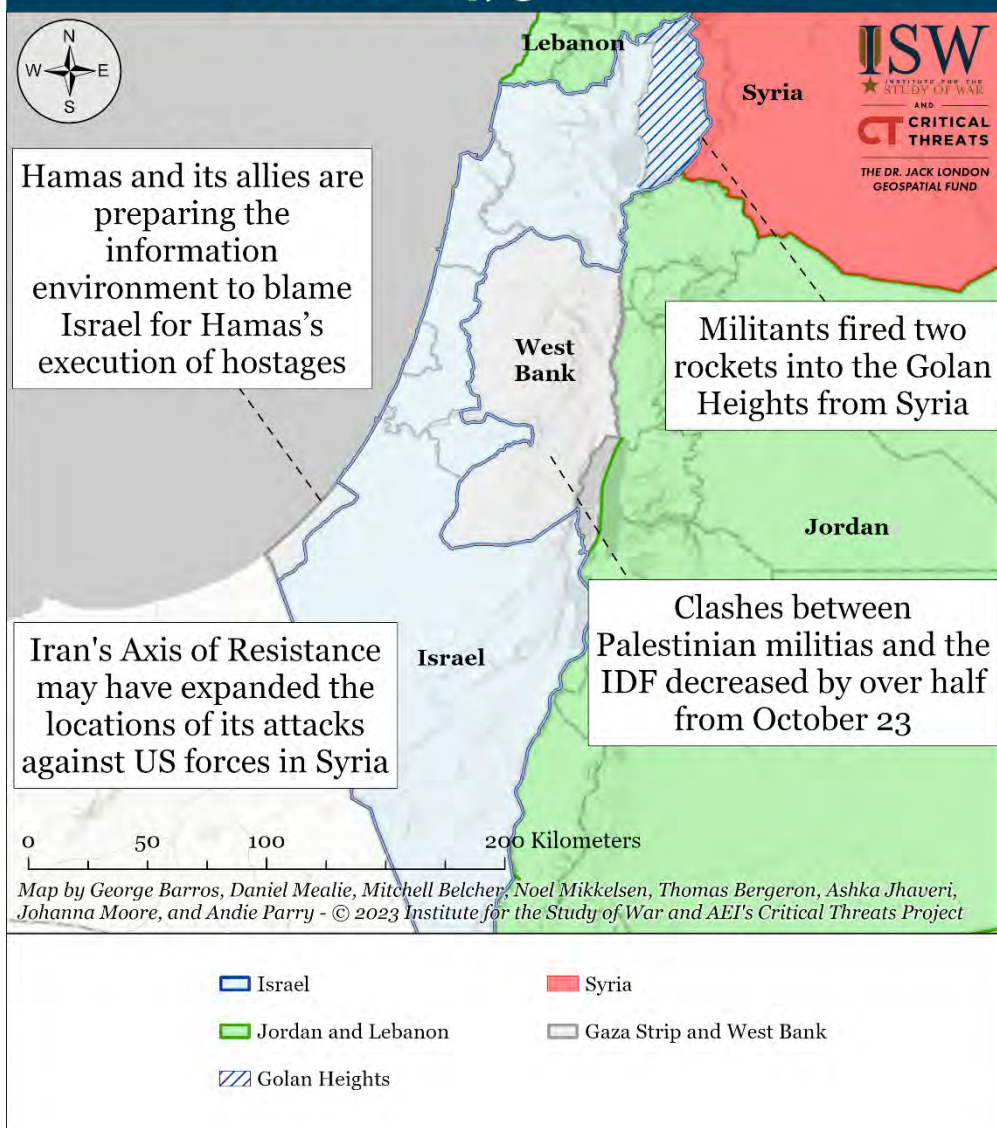
The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the 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 and its allies are preparing the information environment to blame Israel for the possible deaths of hostages in the Gaza Strip, especially if Hamas begins killing hostages. Palestinian militias continued attacks at their usual rate from the Gaza Strip into Israel.
2. Clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces have decreased significantly in the West Bank. Hamas has repeatedly tried to incite violence against Israel in the West Bank since the war began.
3. Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), conducted six attacks as part of an ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets. These attacks are consistent with Western and Israeli reports that LH is trying to "keep Israeli forces busy."
4. The Islamic Resistance of Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—has claimed daily attacks on US bases in Iraq and Syria since October 18. These attacks are part of the Iranian-led effort to deter the United States from providing meaningful support to Israel.
5. Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Alwiya Waad al Haq (the Righteous Promise Brigades) threatened to attack US forces in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.
6. Iran is setting informational conditions to blame the United States and Israel for any further escalation of the war and deflect any responsibility from itself. This narrative that Iran is pushing ignores the fact that Iran has already facilitated the expansion of this war to Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen by directing its proxy and partner militias in these countries to attack US and Israeli targets.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 24, 3:00 PM ET

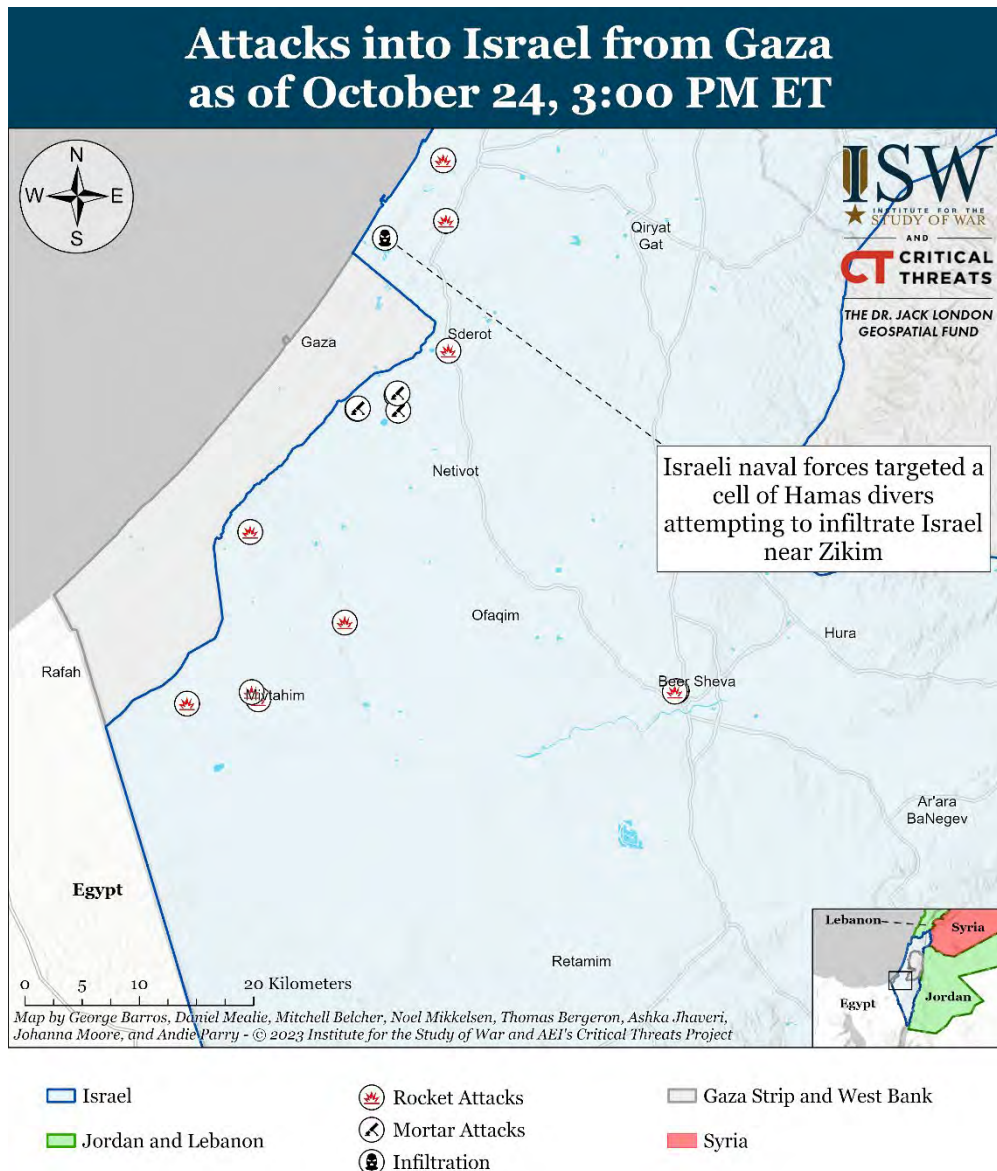


Gaza Strip

Hamis and its allies are preparing the information environment to blame Israel for the possible deaths of hostages in the Gaza Strip, especially if Hamas begins killing hostages. Hamas military spokesperson Abu Ubaida said on October 9 that Hamas would kill hostages in response to Israeli airstrikes, indicating Hamas' willingness to do so for perceived military and/or political gains.[1] Tasnim News Agency—an Iranian outlet affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)—reported on October 22 that Israel's "clandestine goal" is to "cause the killing of captive Israelis," according to "informed sources." [2] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) spokesperson Abu Hamza said on October 24 that Israel does not "pay attention" to the lives of hostages. [3]

Hamis and allied Palestinian militias took hostages during the October 7 attack likely to discourage an Israeli ground operation into the Gaza Strip and/or to secure concessions of some kind. Israeli actions and rhetoric suggest that Hamas and allied militias will fail to generate those desired effects, however. Israel is continuing to prepare for a possible ground operation into the Gaza Strip, and the Wall Street Journal reported that Israel-Hamas hostage negotiations collapsed after Hamas demanded that Israel allow fuel deliveries into the Gaza Strip. [4] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson said that fuel will not enter the strip because Hamas uses fuel for its military infrastructure. [5] Israeli sources said that Israel estimates

that Hamas and allied militias are low on fuel and will need to leave their tunnel networks underneath the Gaza Strip once their fuel is depleted.[6]

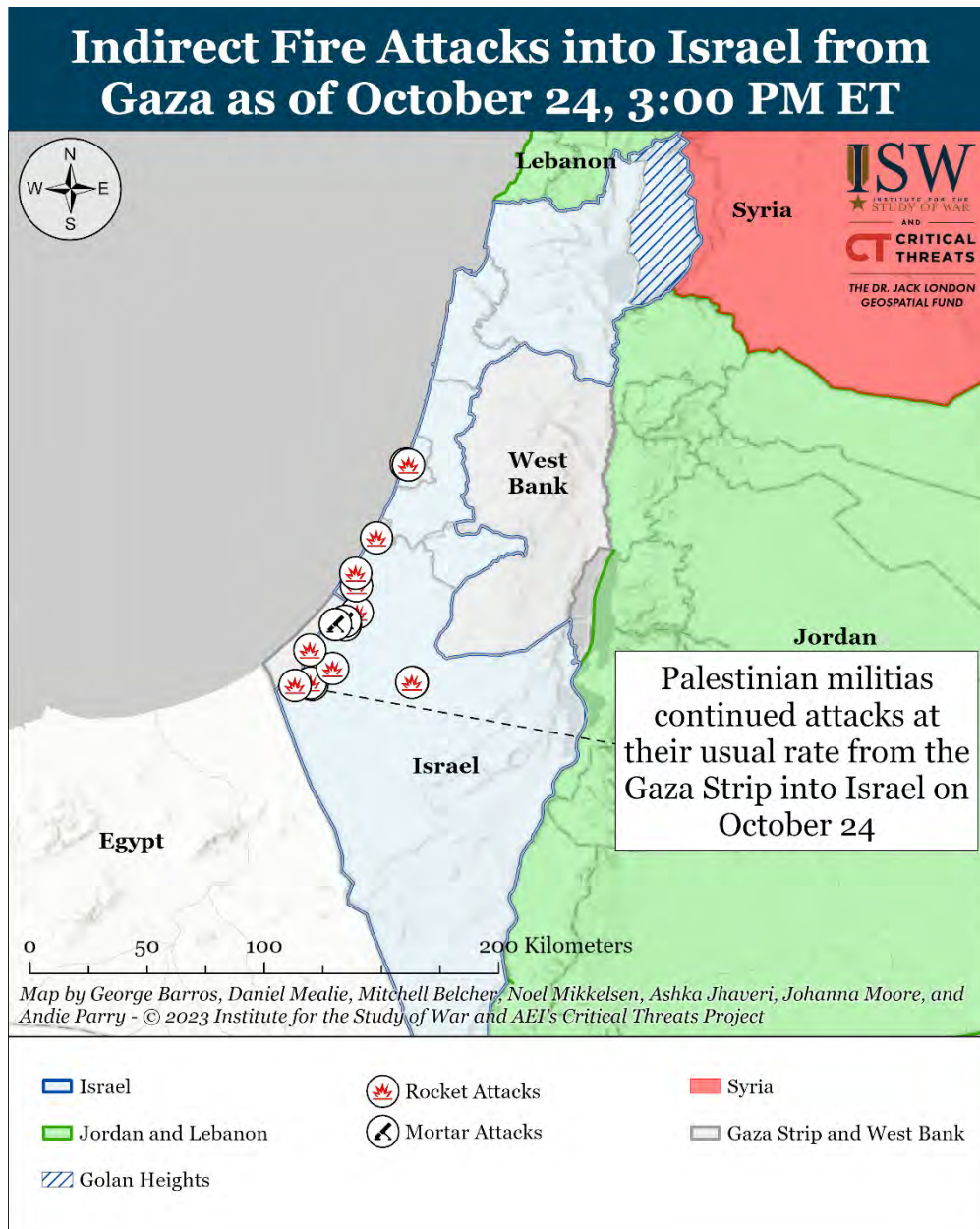


Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Palestinian militias continued attacks at their usual rate from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 24. The al Qassem Brigades—Hamas' militant wing—claimed responsibility for 11 indirect fire attacks.[7] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of PIJ—claimed responsibility for six mortar and rocket attacks.[8] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade—the militant wing of Fatah—claimed responsibility for two rocket attacks.[9] The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades—the militant wing of Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)—claimed responsibility for three mortar attacks.[10] Axis of Resistance-affiliated media and IDF outlets reported two other unclaimed rocket attacks.[11] This rate of attacks is consistent with the rate that CTP-ISW has observed in recent days.

CTP-ISW recorded one infiltration attempt from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 24. IDF naval elements targeted a cell of Hamas divers attempting to infiltrate Israel near Zikim.[12] The al Qassem Brigades claimed that its forces clashed with the IDF near Zikim after the attempted infiltration.[13] Other Palestinian

sources said that fifteen Hamas fighters infiltrated into the Zikim naval base, where they clashed with the IDF.[14] The IDF wounded six Hamas fighters, according to Palestinian media.[15]



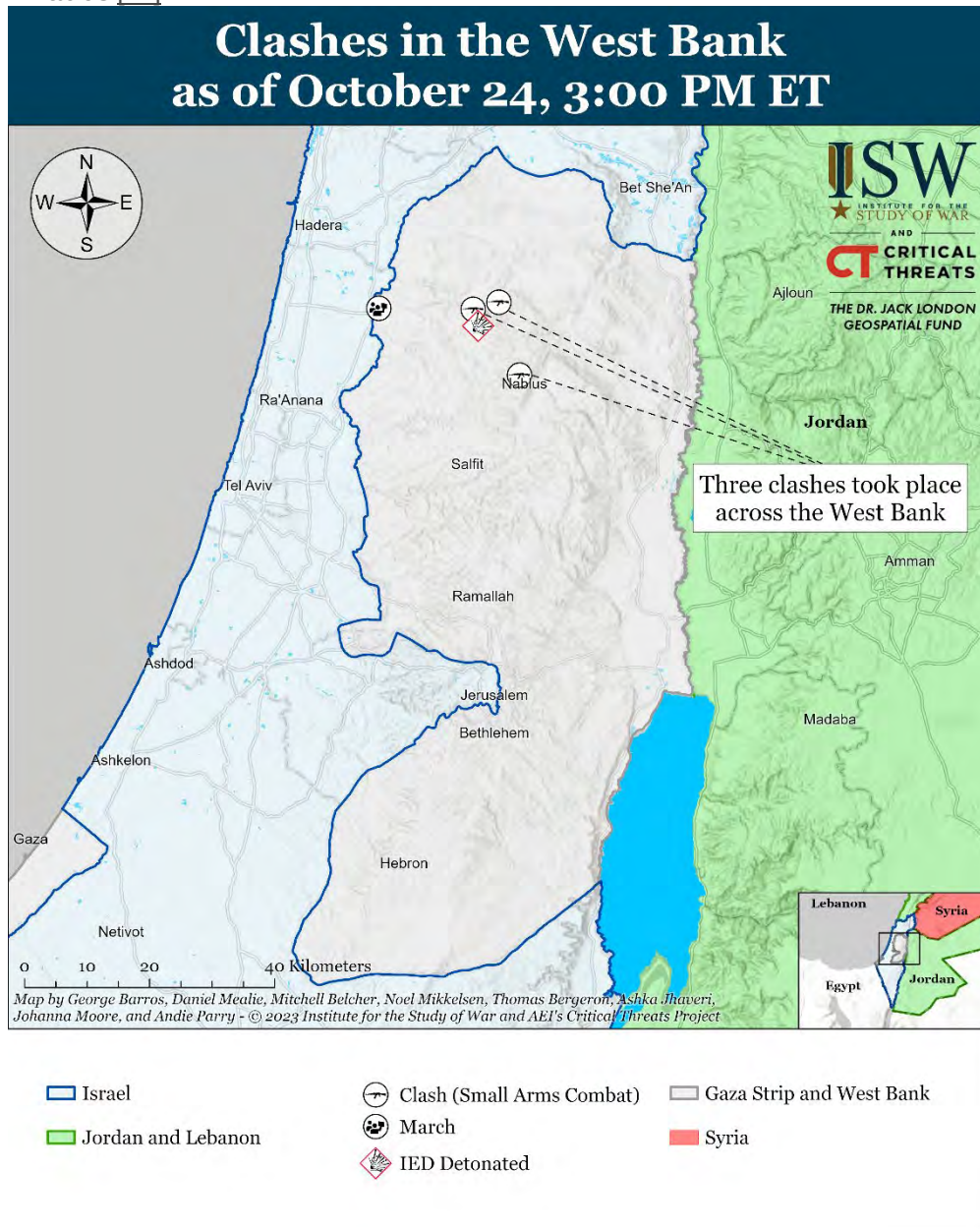
Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

West Bank

Clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces have decreased significantly in the West Bank on October 24. CTP-ISW recorded three clashes on October 24 compared to nine on October 23.[16] CTP-ISW also recorded one demonstration in Tulkrum in solidarity with the Gaza Strip.[17] Hamas has repeatedly tried to incite violence against Israel in the West Bank since the war began.[18]

- The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade claimed responsibility for an ambush targeting the IDF in Burqa, Nablus.[19] Militants lured the IDF before throwing an IED and opening fire at them. Israeli media reported that one IDF soldier was wounded in the fighting.[20]
- The Jabaa Battalion—a component of PIJ's al Quds Brigades—claimed responsibility for shooting down an Israeli drone in Jaba, Jerusalem. LH-controlled al Manar reported that Jabaa Battalion militants shot down the drone while engaging IDF soldiers in small arms combat.[21]

- The Nablus Brigade—a unit of PIJ's al Quds Brigades—reported that it attacked at least one IDF patrol in Nablus.[22]



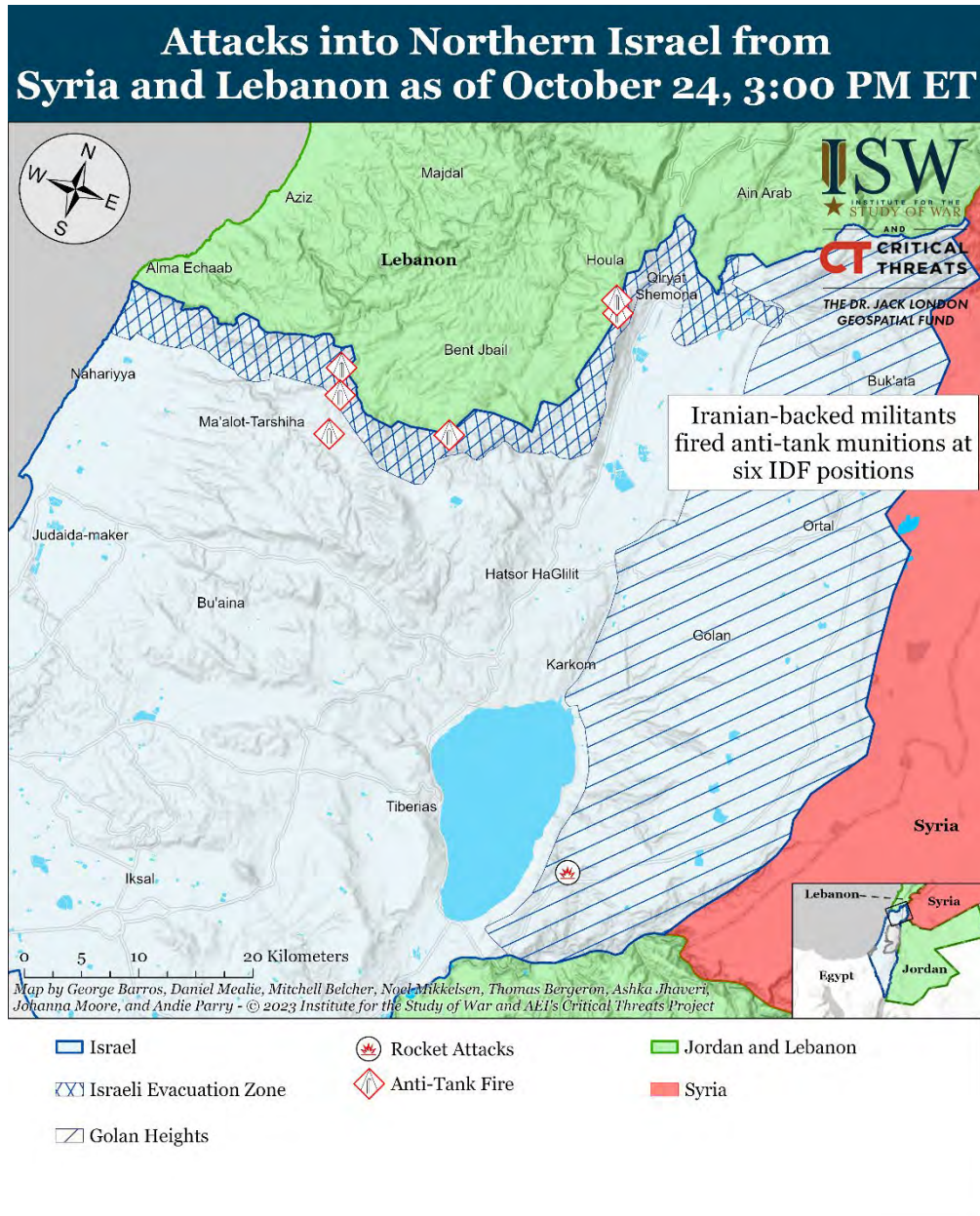
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), conducted six attacks as part of an ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets.[23] LH claimed two anti-tank guided munition (ATGM) attacks on IDF positions along the northern Israeli border.[24] LH also released a compilation video of previous attacks on IDF radar and sensor sites.[25] LH has continued to suffer casualties in the fighting around the border as the IDF targets ATGM squads preparing to fire into Israel.[26] An LH-affiliated journalist claimed that the group intends to destroy the IDF's "espionage capacity" and limit all mechanical and personnel movement along the border through these attacks.[27] These attacks are consistent with Western and Israeli reports that LH is trying to "keep Israeli forces busy." [28] This campaign also creates opportunities for further LH attacks into Israel and increases the risk of further escalation, as CTP-ISW previously noted.[29]

Unidentified militants in southwestern Syria launched two rockets into the Golan Heights on October 24.[30] CTP-ISW has recorded five attacks into the Golan Heights from Syria since the war began.[31] This

most recent attack is inconsistent with the attack pattern that CTP-ISW has observed during the war so far. Unidentified militants have only fired into the Golan Heights from Syria after Israeli airstrikes on Syrian airports up until this point.[32] The IDF has conducted five airstrikes on the Damascus and Aleppo international airports since October 7 to disrupt possible Iranian efforts to transfer military equipment and personnel to Syria.[33]



LH and Lebanese government officials have opposing messages about the possibility of the war expanding to Lebanon. The Lebanese prime minister and Lebanese army commander visited southern Lebanon on October 24 to discuss de-escalating and restoring stability with United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFL) leaders.[34] The Lebanese Army commander stated the Lebanese army is following developments and maintaining readiness at the southern border, while the Lebanese prime minister called Lebanon a peace-loving country. The Lebanese prime minister and the army commander do not control LH forces in southern Lebanon and cannot meaningfully enforce de-escalation, however. LH Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem warned on October 24 that LH is at the heart of the battle to defend the Gaza Strip and that the group's "hand is on the trigger." [35]

Iran and Axis of Resistance

The Islamic Resistance of Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—has claimed daily attacks on US bases in Iraq and Syria since October 18. The group has claimed 15 drone and rocket attacks in this time. The group continues to expand the location of its attacks against US forces in Syria. These attacks are part of the Iranian-led effort to deter the United States from providing meaningful support to Israel, as CTP-ISW previously assessed.^[36]

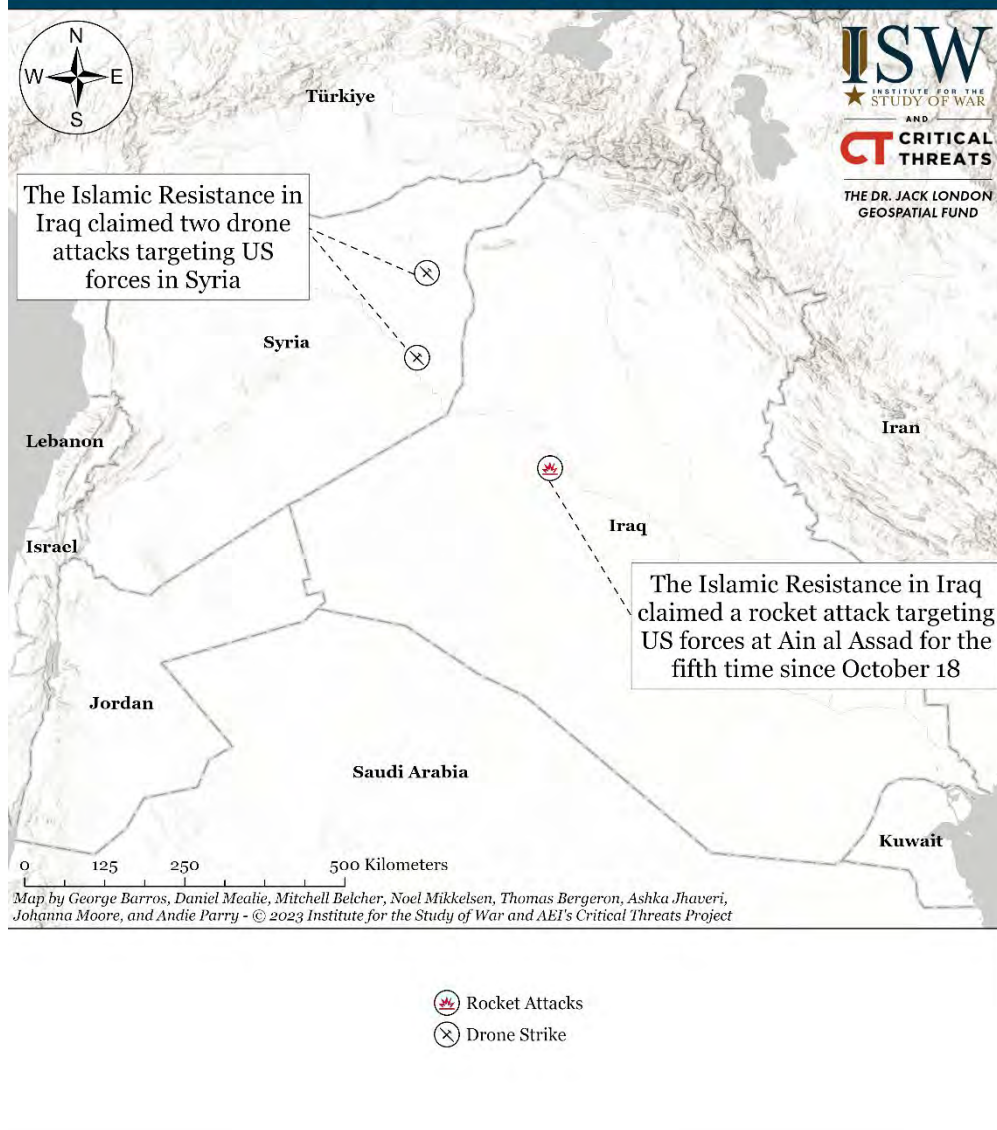
- The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed that it used drones to attack US forces at al Omar and al Shaddadi in eastern and northeastern Syria respectively on October 23.^[37] The group claimed the drones “hit their target”. The group has not previously claimed attacks on US forces in al Omar and al Shaddadi.
- The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed that it fired two rockets at US forces in Ain al Asad airbase in Iraq on October 24.^[38] The group released a video showing the rocket launch but did not include footage of any impact.^[39] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed five attacks on US forces at Ain al Asad airbase since October 18. The leader of the Iranian-backed militia Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba condemned the Iraqi government over its refusal to expel US forces from Iraq on October 24.^[40] Nujaba previously threatened to attack US forces in Iraq in May 2023.^[41] London-based, Qatar-funded al Araby al Jadeed reported that Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani met with the heads of Iranian-backed proxies in Iraq in an effort to deescalate with US forces in Iraq.^[42] Nujaba and another Iranian-backed Iraqi militia, Kataib Hezbollah, refused to meet with Sudani and rejected calls for de-escalation.^[43]

Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Alwiya Waad al Haq (the Righteous Promise Brigades) threatened to attack US forces in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates on October 24.^[44] Alwiya Waad al Haq previously claimed drone attacks targeting the Saudi royal palace in January 2021 and “vital facilities” in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates in February 2022.^[45] CTP-ISW previously assessed that this group was likely a front for Kataib Hezbollah.^[46] Pro-Iran Telegram channels affiliated with Iraqi proxy groups echoed the group’s threat to attack US forces in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.^[47] This threat and its amplification in pro-Iran channels suggest that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias are willing to escalate regionally beyond Iraq and Syria.

Iran is setting informational conditions to blame the United States and Israel for any further escalation of the war and deflect any responsibility from itself. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s official website accused Israel of trying to ignite “a direct war against Iran with US support.”^[48] Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanani stated on October 24 that Iran is seeking to preserve regional “stability and security” despite “war-mongering” from the United States and its allies.^[49] IRGC-affiliated Fars News Agency argued on October 24 that Axis of Resistance attacks on American bases in Iraq and Syria are only meant to deter further American involvement in the Israel-Hamas war.^[50] Nine unspecified Iranian officials told the Qatari-owned, London-based al Araby al Jadeed that Iran only supports “limited” and “small-scale” militia attacks on Israel and US positions in the region but would not seek to open a “major new front in the war” on October 24.^[51] Iran’s Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali lastly stated that the responsibility for “any escalation” of the conflict would fall on the United States and Israel during an interview with Russian state media on October 24.

This information operation that the Iranian regime is conducting is meant to frame the United States and Israel as the antagonists in the war and especially in the event that it escalates further. This information operation also frames the regime as responsible and non-escalatory to its population. This narrative that Iran is pushing ignores the fact that Iran has already facilitated the expansion of this war to Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen by directing its proxy and partner militias in these countries to attack US and Israeli targets.

Attacks on US Bases in the Middle East as of October 24, 3:00 PM ET



Iranian state media is seizing on Israeli and Western reports of divisions between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and IDF generals and between Israel and the United States to revive pre-war narratives about Netanyahu's and Israel's isolation and weakness. State-run outlet IRNA recirculated Israeli reporting on October 23 about "disagreements" between Netanyahu and the IDF and about Israel's "inability to decide" on a ground operation into the Gaza Strip.^[52] IRNA's framing of the disagreements differs from the original Israeli reporting that noted that the Israeli war cabinet and senior Israeli military officials disagree on the "timing and scope" of a ground operation—not on whether to conduct such an operation in the first place.^[53] Iranian officials and media repeatedly claimed throughout 2023 that Israel was at its "weakest point" due to protests over Netanyahu's proposed judicial reforms and internal political fissures.^[54] Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei stated in April 2023, for example, that Israel was in its worst position and "in a hurry" to collapse.^[55] IRNA separately recirculated Israeli and American reporting on October 24 that some US officials doubt the IDF's readiness to conduct a ground operation into the Gaza Strip.^[56] The regime's emphasis on disharmony between Israel and the United States contrasts with its emphasis on Muslim unity against Israel. Tehran has historically—and particularly since the start of the war on October 7—sought to rally Muslim countries against Israel and frame itself as a champion of the Palestinian cause, as CTP-ISW previously reported.^[57]

Iranian media exaggerated the scope and losses of the IDF's October 22 raid on Khan Younis as part of its ongoing efforts to deter an Israeli ground operation into the Gaza Strip. Israel conducted a limited raid on Khan Younis to gather information about Israeli hostages and to prepare for a ground operation into the Gaza Strip.[58] The IDF announced that one Israeli soldier was killed during the raid but did not acknowledge Hamas' claim that it had destroyed Israeli military equipment.[59] State-controlled, English-language Press TV claimed on October 23 that Hamas forced 20 Israeli tanks to retreat during the clashes at Khan Younis.[60] Press TV also claimed that Israeli forces were "caught in an ambush" near Rafah on October 22, which forced them to abandon 10 tanks. IRGC Deputy Commander Brigadier General Ali Fadavi similarly referred to the Khan Younis raid when warning Israel on October 23 that a ground operation into the Gaza Strip would precipitate a "regrettable answer from" the Axis of Resistance. Iranian media and officials' framing of the Khan Younis raid as a defeat for Israel is consistent with previous Iranian rhetoric that the IDF will face "significant challenges" if it launches a ground operation.[61]

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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 25, 2023

Iran Update, October 25, 2023

Nicholas Carl, Brian Carter, Kathryn Tyson, Johanna Moore, Amin Soltani, Annika Ganzeveld, Peter Mills, and Andie Parry

Contributor: Cosima von Moltke

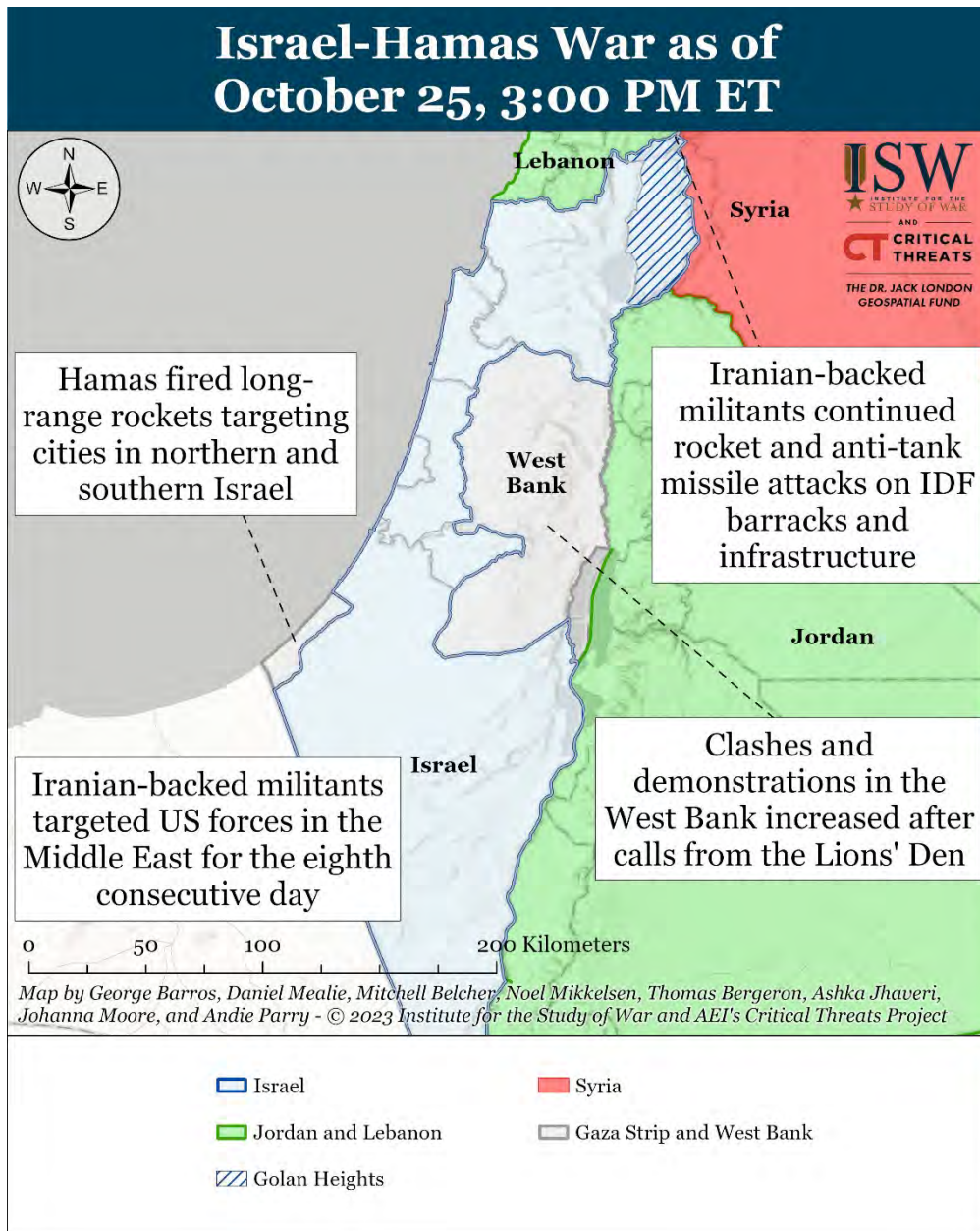
The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the 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, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

Key Takeaways:

1. Iran and its so-called "Axis of Resistance" are pursuing a coordinated strategy to (1) deter Israel from trying to destroy Hamas in the Gaza Strip, (2) prevent Israel from destroying Hamas if deterrence fails, and (3) deter the United States from providing military support for Israel's ground operation in the Gaza Strip.
2. Hamas is conducting attacks targeting population centers and conducting an information operation to erode the will of Israel's political establishment and public to launch and sustain a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip.
3. Palestinian militias are trying to drive anti-Israel unrest in the West Bank to draw in IDF assets and resources and fix them there.
4. The Axis of Resistance is harassing IDF forces with indirect and direct fire along the Israel-Lebanon border, which aims to draw IDF assets and resources toward northern Israel while setting conditions for successive campaigns into Israel.
5. Iran and the Axis of Resistance are trying to demonstrate their capability and willingness to escalate against the United States and Israel from multiple fronts.
6. Iranian and Axis of Resistance leaders will need to adjust their strategy and the subordinate campaigns if Israel launches a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip.
7. Palestinian militias continued attacks at the usual rate from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 25. Hamas fired two long-range rockets Haifa and Eilat as part of its effort to erode the Israeli political establishment's will to support a ground operation into Gaza.
8. West Bank residents demonstrated and took up arms against the IDF in response to calls from the Lions' Den—an Iran-linked West Bank militia.
9. The IDF conducted airstrikes against two Syrian military positions in southwestern Syria on October 24 and an airstrike on the Aleppo International Airport runway on October 25. Militants are likely to respond with indirect fire attacks, which is the consistent response pattern to Israeli airstrikes in Syria since the war began.
10. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed two attacks targeting US forces based at Abu Hajar Airport, Hasakah Province, Syria on October 24 and 25.

11. Hamas, LH, and PIJ appear to be coordinating and making final contingency preparations ahead of an Israeli invasion of Gaza.
- 12.



Iran and its so-called “Axis of Resistance” are pursuing a coordinated strategy to (1) deter Israel from trying to destroy Hamas in the Gaza Strip, (2) prevent Israel from destroying Hamas if deterrence fails, and (3) deter the United States from providing military support to Israel’s ground operation in the Gaza Strip. Iran and its proxy and partner militias throughout the Middle East seek to ensure Hamas’ long-term survival, as Israel has indicated that it will soon launch a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip to destroy Hamas. The Iran-led effort to prevent this outcome is occurring along four main geographic axes: the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, southern Lebanon, and the broader Middle East. The following text examines the campaign objectives that CTP-ISW assesses that the Axis of Resistance is pursuing on each axis in support of its strategic objectives of deterring Israel and the United States.

Hamas is conducting attacks targeting population centers and conducting an information operation to erode the will of Israel’s political establishment and public to launch and sustain a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip. Hamas and its partner militias have conducted mass rocket barrages against

Israeli population centers daily since the war began.[1] Hamas and its partners across the Axis of Resistance are also messaging that they will defeat Israel's ground operation and kill and capture Israeli soldiers.[2] IRGC-affiliated news agencies and Iranian state media highlighted "significant challenges" facing the IDF in Gaza, which they claimed would cause heavy IDF casualties, poor relations with the Arab world, and declining public support.[3] This messaging effort supports the Palestinian militants' military operations by questioning Israeli military capabilities and Israel's ability to successfully defeat Hamas to undermine political and popular will. It also buoys the groups' supporters by highlighting Israel's vulnerabilities and emphasizing the strength of Hamas and its partners.[4]

Hamas and its partners also use messaging and indirect fire targeting IDF units to degrade IDF material and morale around the Gaza Strip. Hamas and its partners are targeting military positions surrounding the Gaza Strip, including artillery batteries, airbases, and "concentrations" of IDF soldiers.[5] Saraya al Quds spokesperson Abu Hamza highlighted that Israeli soldiers are "worn out" by these attacks, suggesting Hamas and its allies aim to demoralize IDF forces while simultaneously degrading IDF material.[6] The Palestinian militant groups are coupling their military efforts with a messaging effort that highlights the groups' strong defensive capabilities in the Gaza Strip, as well as the friction between the Israeli political leadership and military leadership.[7]

Palestinian militias are trying to drive anti-Israel unrest in the West Bank to draw in IDF assets and resources and fix them there. These militias have repeatedly called for Palestinians there to mobilize and join the fight against Israel. Hamas, for instance, released a statement on October 14 calling for the establishment of "popular protection committee" in all cities and towns in the West Bank to target Israeli settlers.[8] Hamas added that all Palestinians have a duty to actively participate in the fighting against Israel. Iranian state media has recirculated Palestinian militia calls for greater violence in the West Bank.[9] Unspecified armed militants have used small arms to target Israeli forces and anti-Israel protests have occurred daily in the West Bank, but it is unclear how much of this activity the Palestinian militias facilitated. Palestinian militias have cooperated to fight Israeli forces in some limited instances.[10] Palestinian militias have increasingly used improvised explosive devices against Israeli forces since October 18.[11]

The Axis of Resistance is harassing IDF forces with indirect and direct fire along the Israel-Lebanon border, which aims to draw IDF assets and resources toward northern Israel while setting conditions for successive campaigns into Israel. Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) is using indirect and direct fire to target Israel's civilian and military infrastructure while messaging that Israel will pay a "high price" when a ground operation begins.[12] These military operations aim to fix IDF units along the northern Israeli border to prevent their ability to support Israel's ground operation in the Gaza Strip. LH's deputy leader said on October 21 that LH's operations in southern Lebanon aim to "weaken the Israeli enemy and let them know we are ready." [13] He claimed that LH has fixed three Israeli divisions in northern Israel.[14] LH's attacks simultaneously create conditions for successive operations against the IDF in northern Israel by targeting critical Israeli signals facilities and communications infrastructure.[15] CTP-ISW has previously assessed that targeting these sites aims to create opportunities for LH in the event it decides to conduct ground operations into Israel by degrading signals intelligence and communications.[16]

Iran and the Axis of Resistance are trying to demonstrate their capability and willingness to escalate against the United States and Israel from multiple fronts. The Islamic Resistance of Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—has attacked US military positions in Iraq and Syria daily since October 18. The group has used drones and rockets in these attacks, which have killed one US contractor and injured dozens. The group has continually hit certain locations, such as the Ain al Asad airbase in Iraq, while also gradually expanding its attacks to new locations in Iraq and Syria. An Iranian-backed militia threatened on October 24 to further expand attacks to US positions in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. The Houthi movement in Yemen separately on October 19 tried to conduct a drone and cruise missile attack into Israel. A US Navy destroyer and Saudi air defenses intercepted the attack over the Red Sea before it struck Israel.[17]

Iran and the Axis of Resistance are preparing for the possibility that the war in Israel will expand into a regional conflict fought on multiple fronts. They are trying to build up their force presence in Syria and Lebanon to this end. The IRGC Quds Force has coordinated the deployment of hundreds of Iranian-backed militants in southern Lebanon and southwestern Syria since the war began.[18] These militants include military engineers and missile experts, among others.[19] Israel has furthermore conducted several airstrikes

on the Damascus and Aleppo international airports since October 12 and indicated that the airstrikes are meant to prevent Iran from moving weapons into Syria and/or opening a front against Israel from there.[20]

Iran has been messaging that the United States and Israel are to blame for any further escalation of the war while deflecting any responsibility from itself. Iranian officials and media have repeatedly emphasized the role of the United States and Israel in instigating the war and contrastingly messaged that Iran is a responsible and non-escalatory actor.[21] This narrative ignores the fact that Iran has already facilitated the expansion of this war to Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen by directing its proxy and partner militias in these countries to attack US and Israeli targets. Iranian officials and media have separately messaged that they have popular support to fight a regional war against the United States and Israel if one erupts.[22]

Iranian and Axis of Resistance leaders will need to adjust their strategy and the subordinate campaigns if Israel launches a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip. They will likely reorient from attempting to deter a ground operation into the Gaza Strip to prevent it from succeeding and eroding US, Israeli, and international support for the ground operation to cause Israel to terminate it prematurely.

Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance Campaign Objectives

Erode the will of 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 continued attacks at the usual rate from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October

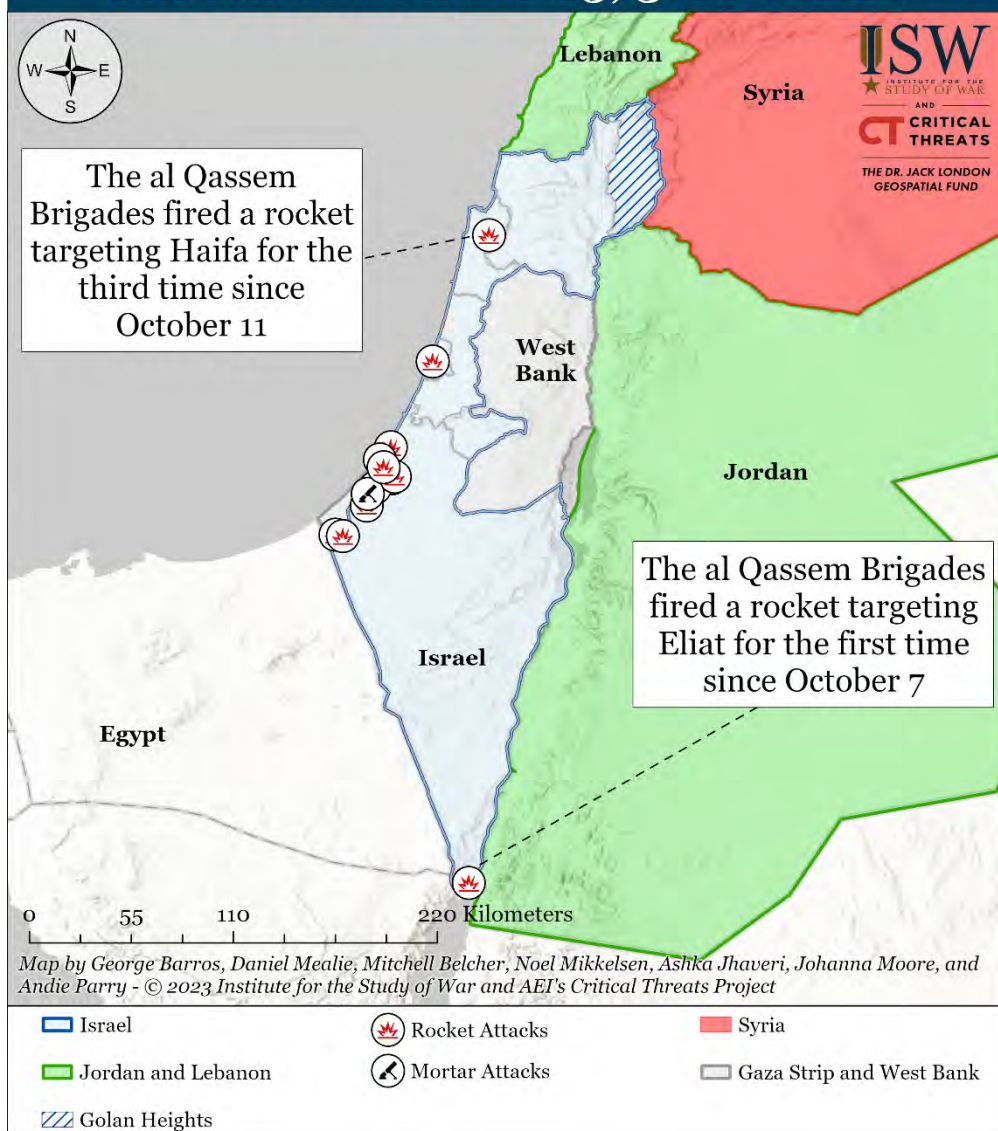
25. The al Qassem Brigades— Hamas' militant wing—claimed responsibility for seven indirect fire attacks.[23] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for six rocket attacks.[24] The National Resistance Brigades—the militant wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine—claimed responsibility for two mortar and rocket attacks.[25] Axis of Resistance-affiliated media reported two other unclaimed rocket attacks.[26] This rate of attacks is consistent with the rate that CTP-ISW has observed in recent days.

Hamas fired two long range rockets at cities in northern and southern Israel as part of its effort to erode the Israeli political establishment's will to support a ground operation into Gaza. Hamas continues to fire mortars and rockets at a mixture of IDF military targets near Gaza and civilian towns farther from Gaza. The attacks follow the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps deputy commander's October 23 threat that Iran would launch missiles at Haifa "if necessary." [27]

- Hamas fired one R160 rocket targeting Haifa in northern Israel on October 25.[28] This is the third time Hamas has fired R160 rockets targeting Haifa since October 11. The IDF stated the rocket exploded in the air south of Haifa.[29] Hamas produces the R160 rocket, which has a 160km range, locally in Gaza.[30] Iran has provided equipment and technical knowledge to help Hamas expand and improve its ability to domestically produce longer-range rockets.[31]
- Hamas also fired one Ayyash 250 rocket targeting Eilat in southern Israel on October 25 for the first time. Israeli social media accounts reported the rocket landed in an open field near Eilat.[32] The Ayyash 250 rocket has a 250km range that Hamas produces locally with Iranian assistance.[33]

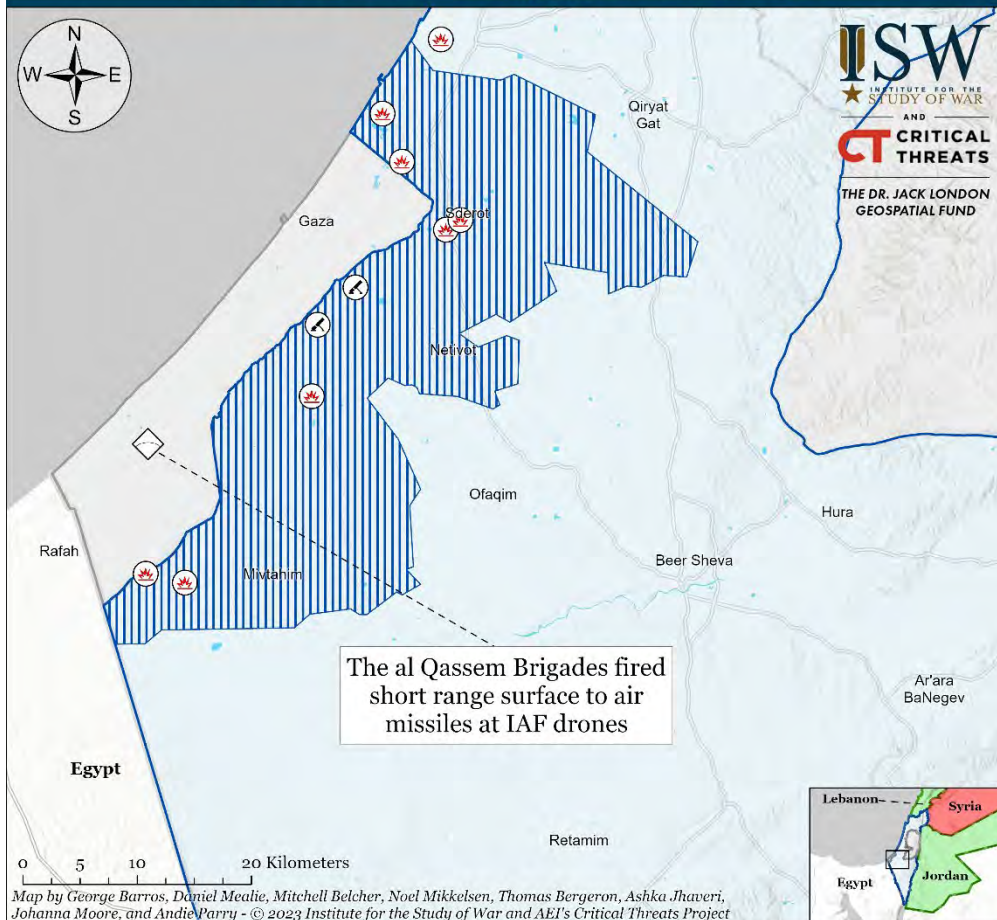
IDF airstrikes continue to kill Hamas leadership and operatives in Gaza. The IDF announced that it killed a battalion commander for Hamas' military wing, the al Qassem Brigades, in Khan Younis, Gaza, on October 25.[34] The IDF stated this commander previously served as the head of Hamas' naval forces. CTP-ISW previously reported the IDF is degrading Hamas' naval capabilities which Hamas could use to target Israeli gas rigs and other infrastructure.[35]

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 25, 3:00 PM ET



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

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 25, 3:00 PM ET



- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Israel | Rocket Attacks | Gaza Strip and West Bank |
| Israeli Closed Military Zone | Mortar Attacks | Syria |
| Jordan and Lebanon | Air Defense | |

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

West Bank

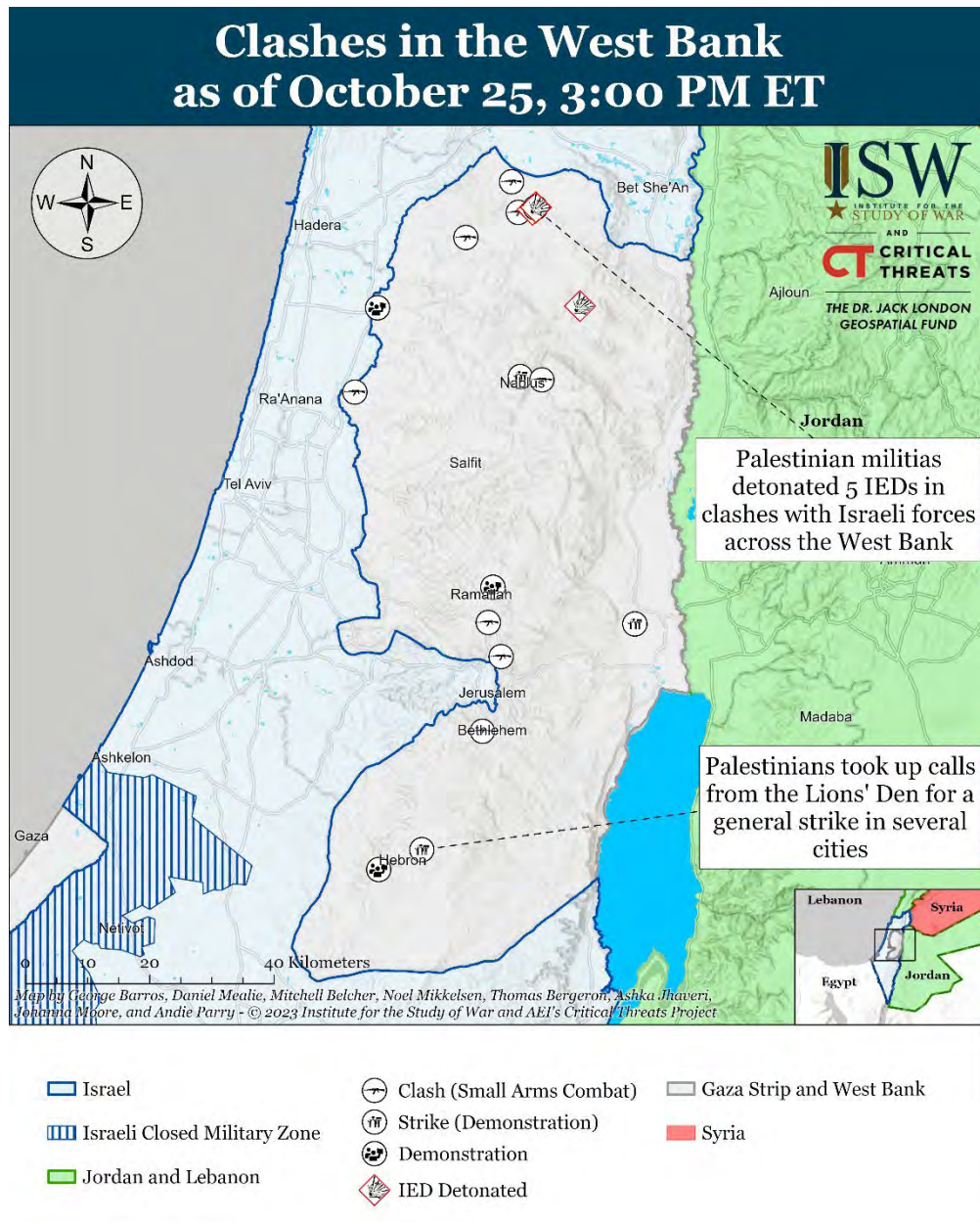
Axis of Resistance Campaign Objectives

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

West Bank residents demonstrated and took up arms against the IDF in response to calls from the Lions' Den—an Iran-linked West Bank militia.[36] The Lions' Den call to arms is the first from the group since October 11.[37] CTP-ISW recorded 14 clashes in the West Bank on October 25 compared to three on October 24.[38] Palestinian militias used at least five homemade IEDs in clashes with Israeli security forces. [39] CTP-ISW recorded four demonstrations, four general strikes, and two student groups' strike statements in explicit response to the Lions' Den's call.[40]

- The Jenin Battalion—a component of PIJ's Al Quds Brigades—claimed responsibility for an ambush targeting the IDF in Jenin.[41] The battalion also claimed responsibility for a sniper attack on IDF personnel.[42] The IDF conducted an airstrike on the camp during the ambush and extended clashes.[43]
- October 25 was the highest level of militant and popular activity in the West Bank since Hamas issued a mobilization call on October 20. [44] The increase in activity demonstrates the ability of the Lions' Den to

mobilize action across the West Bank. Elevated levels of clashes and demonstrations draw IDF assets and resources toward the West Bank.



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

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

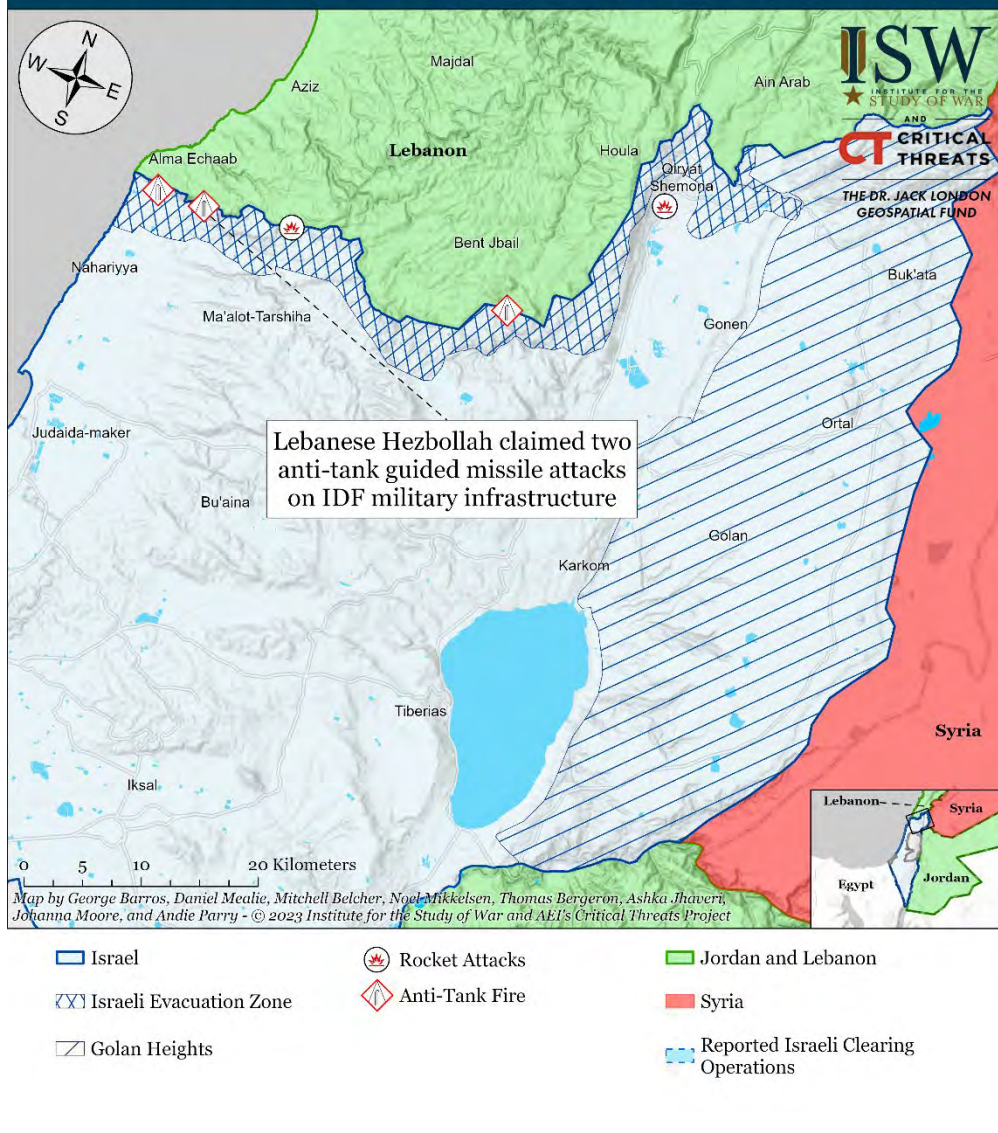
The IDF conducted airstrikes against two Syrian military positions in southwestern Syria on October 24, marking the first time the IDF has publicly targeted the Syrian military since the Israel-Gaza war began. The IDF has used artillery in response to militant attacks from Syria to northern Israel since October 7. CTP-ISW has recorded three instances of Iranian-backed militants in Syria firing rockets at northern Israel since October 7.[45] The IDF has responded by firing artillery into Syrian territory.[46] The Syrian Arab Army (SAA) also conducted a mortar strike into the Golan Heights after IDF airstrikes on the Aleppo and Damascus international airports on October 12.[47] The IDF has used artillery to strike SAA positions in southwestern Syria on several occasions in 2023.[48]

- The IDF targeted the Syrian 5th Division, including the 12th Armored Brigade, in Izraa, Daraa Province, southwestern Syria.[49] The IDF also struck SAA weapons depots and radar systems in Qarfa, Daraa Province, southwestern Syria. Syrian state news agency SANA reported the strikes killed eight SAA soldiers and wounded seven others.[50] The IDF said the airstrikes were in response to rocket attacks from Syria into northern Israel.[51]
- The IDF dropped leaflets claiming that the SAA is responsible for attacks from Syria to Israel and warned that attacks from Syria would be met with an “iron hand.”[52] The statement specifically blamed a Syrian commander in the 112th Mechanized Brigade, which is a component of the Syrian 5th Division.[53]

The IDF Air Force conducted an airstrike on the Aleppo international airport runway on October 25 for the fourth time since October 7.[54] This was the sixth strike on Syrian airports total since October 7. Militants will likely respond with indirect fire attacks, which is the consistent response to Israeli airstrikes into Syria since the war began.[55] Iranian-backed militants continued to move into areas in Syria bordering the Golan Heights on October 24.[56]

Iranian-backed militants, including LH, conducted six attacks as part of an ongoing attack campaign against IDF forces and assets on October 25. These attacks create opportunities for additional Iranian-backed ground attacks into Israel and increase the risk of further escalation, as CTP-ISW previously noted.[57] LH conducted three anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) attacks targeting IDF military barracks and infrastructure.[58] The IDF responded with multiple artillery strikes and airstrikes in southern Lebanon and on the Israel-Lebanese border, including against ATGM squads.[59]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon as of October 25, 3:00 PM ET



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

Iran and Axis of Resistance

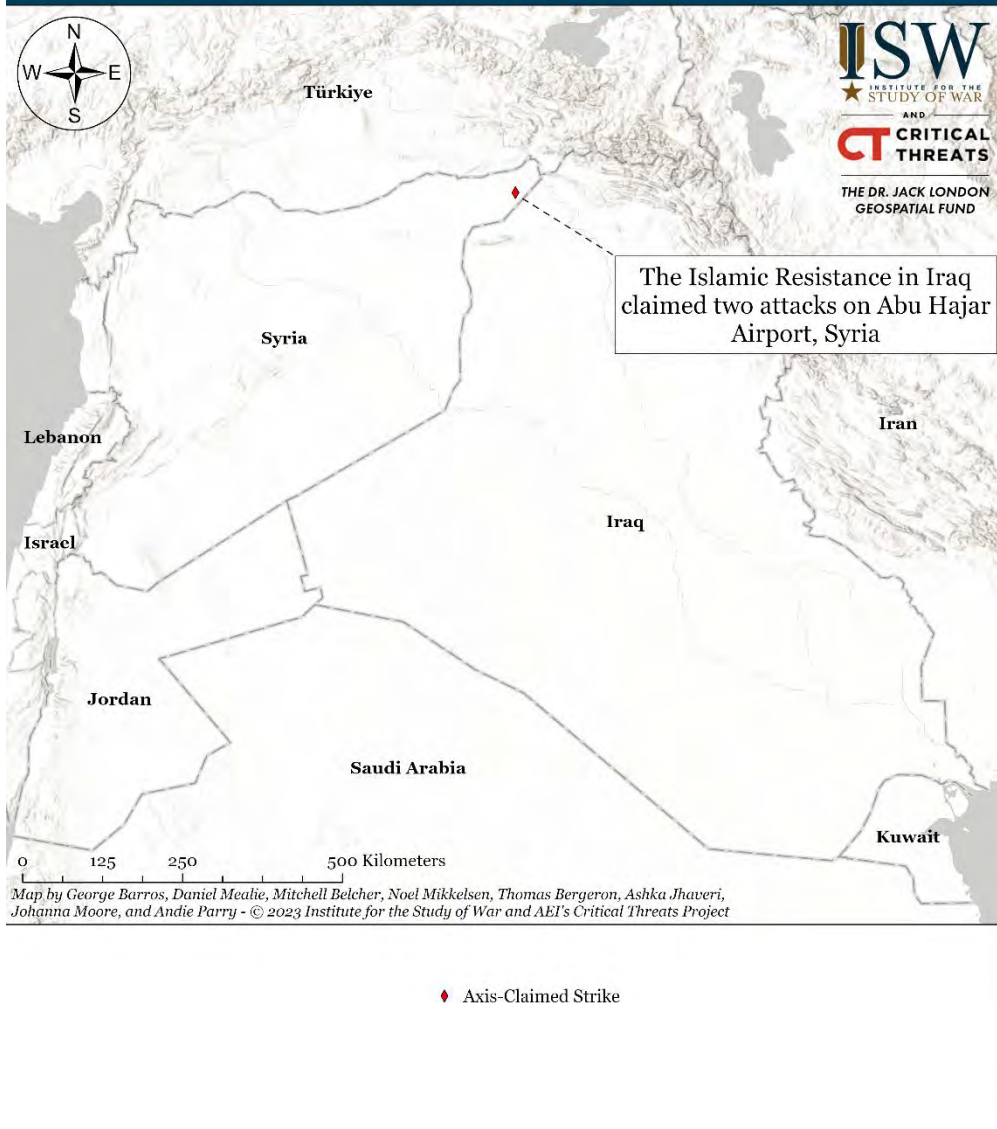
Axis of Resistance Campaign Objectives

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 Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed two attacks targeting US forces based at Abu Hajar Airport, Hasakah Province, Syria on October 24 and 25. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq reported that both rocket attacks “hit their target.” The group released footage of a rocket launch it claimed targeted US forces stationed at the airport, however, the footage did not depict any impact.[60] The United States has not confirmed any attack on US forces at Abu Hajar Airport as of 3:00 PM ET. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed 17 of the 19 reported attacks on US forces in the Middle East since October 18.[61] The October 24 attack was the first by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq against US forces at Abu Hajar Airport. US forces use the Abu Hajar Airport to support Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) counter-ISIS operations according to a 2016 Voice of America (VOA) report, however, US officials reported that it is not a US base.[62]

Attacks on US Bases in the Middle East as of October 25, 3:00 PM ET



Hamas, LH, and PIJ appear to be coordinating and making final contingency preparations ahead of an Israeli invasion into Gaza. LH Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas Deputy Political Bureau Chief Saleh al Arouri, and PIJ Secretary General Ziyad al Nakhalah met in Beirut on October 24 to discuss implementing “appropriate measures... at the current critical stage.”[63] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reported that Israeli forces will conduct a ground operation into the Gaza Strip “soon” during a televised speech on October 25.[64] *The Wall Street Journal* cited an unidentified informed source who reported that Israel has delayed its ground operation into Gaza for at least another two days until the United States finished deploying air defense systems to US forces stationed in the Middle East.[65] Hamas, LH, and PIJ coordination suggest that actors within Iran’s Axis of Resistance are planning a coordinated response to an Israeli ground operation.

Iranian officials and media are calling for a “ceasefire” in the Hamas-Israel war and accusing the United States, France, and the United Kingdom of using their permanent membership in the UN Security Council (UNSC) to prolong the conflict. Iran’s Permanent Representative to the UN Amir Saeid Iravani called for an immediate ceasefire in a speech at the UN Security Council’s first open debate on the war on October 24.[66] Iravani also claimed that the United States has vetoed over 40 UNSC resolutions and

that the UNSC's "inaction" is emboldening Israel to commit "more egregious crimes" against the Palestinians. Iranian state media separately accused the United States, France, and the United Kingdom of prioritizing Israel's right to self-defense over stopping Israeli attacks against Palestinians in Gaza.[67]

CTP-ISW assesses that Iranian officials are likely using the term "ceasefire" to refer to the cessation of the Hamas-Israel war in its current state. It is in Iran's interest to end the war in its current state because Hamas has inflicted losses on the IDF, the Israeli government, and Israeli society. Israel, on the other hand, is preparing a ground operation into the Gaza Strip to destroy Hamas.

Iran's efforts to frame Western countries as the antagonists in the war and itself as a promoter of peace are part of the regime's ongoing information operation to deflect responsibility for any further escalation of the conflict away from Iran. This information operation ignores the fact that Iran has already facilitated the expansion of this war to Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen by directing its proxy and partner militias in these countries to attack US and Israeli targets.[68]

The Iranian regime is facing a message-control problem in its ongoing information operations. The IRGC-affiliated *Tasnim News Agency* published an article stressing that Hamas's rocket attacks against Israel would not be as successful as they are were it not for Iran's extensive support during previous years.[69] Iranian officials and media have been rejecting claims of Iranian involvement in the Al Aqsa Flood operation since October 9, however, arguing that credit for Hamas' "successful" operation belongs "solely" to the Palestinians themselves.[70]

Iran is simultaneously engaged in separate information operations aimed at two distinct audiences which could explain the conflicting messaging. Iran is attempting to deter further escalation with the United States. The IRGC-affiliated *Fars News Agency* argued on October 24 that Axis of Resistance attacks on American bases in Iraq and Syria are only meant to deter further American involvement in the Israel-Hamas war, as CTP-ISW previously reported.[71] Iran is also attempting to message its support for Hamas to other members of its Axis of Resistance. Western media reported on October 22 that Iranian officials are concerned about preventing the perception among members of their Axis of Resistance that Iran is not sufficiently supporting Hamas.[72]

The *Wall Street Journal* separately reported on October 25 that IRGC Quds Force officers trained hundreds of Hamas fighters inside Iran in the weeks leading up to the October 7 attack.[73] The *Washington Post* similarly reported on October 9 that Iran provided Hamas with weapons and training prior to the attack.[74] These reports are inconsistent with *Tasnim's* claim that Iran has only supported Hamas capabilities in distant years not recent weeks. The IRGC has previously armed and trained Hamas operatives inside Iran since the early 2000s.[75]

[1] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/42>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/43>; <https://t.me/QudsN/318187>; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/36494; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/30>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/31>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/31>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/32>; <https://t.me/kataebabuali/10438>

[2] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/08/01/2973041>; <https://t.me/abuhamzasaraya/79>; <https://t.me/abuhamzasaraya/78>; <https://t.me/abuhamzasaraya/77> (Dead link. Source available on request)

[3] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/08/01/2973041>; <https://www.irna.ir/news/85266625>; <https://www.irna.ir/news/85268344>

[4] <https://t.me/abuhamzasaraya/69>

[5] <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28711>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132453>; <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28690>

[6] <https://t.me/abuhamzasaraya/78>

[7] <https://t.me/abuhamzasaraya/77>

[8] <https://t.me/hamasps>

[9] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/20/2970393>; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/20/2970398>

[10] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-20-2023>

[11] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-18-2023>

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- [15] <https://t.me/almanarnews/132260>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132256>; <https://www.almanar.com.lb/11105360>; <https://www.almanar.com.lb/11086682>; <https://central-media.org/36360/600/>; <https://twitter.com/AlMayadeenNews/status/1714292255501201810>
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- [18] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-16-2023>
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- [20] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-22-2023>
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- [26] <https://t.me/maymun5/55188>; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/36672
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- [32] https://twitter.com/no_itsmyturn/status/1717153957611458790
- [33] <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/irans-rockets-palestinian-groups>
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- [35] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-20-2023...>
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- [39] https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/36600; <https://t.me/AymanGouda/5796>; <https://t.me/QudsN/318286>
- [40] <https://t.me/QudsN/318183>; <https://t.me/QudsN/318171>; <https://t.me/...>
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- [42] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16460>
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- [46] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1713274395865554957>; <https://twitter.com/...>; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1711830875783004286>
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- [48] https://twitter.com/sham_forstudies/status/1648676182173294595%20%20https://t...; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1704859054936322381%20%20https://t...>
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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 26, 2023

Iran Update, October 26, 2023

Peter Mills, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Ashka Jhaveri, Brian Carter, and Nicholas Carl

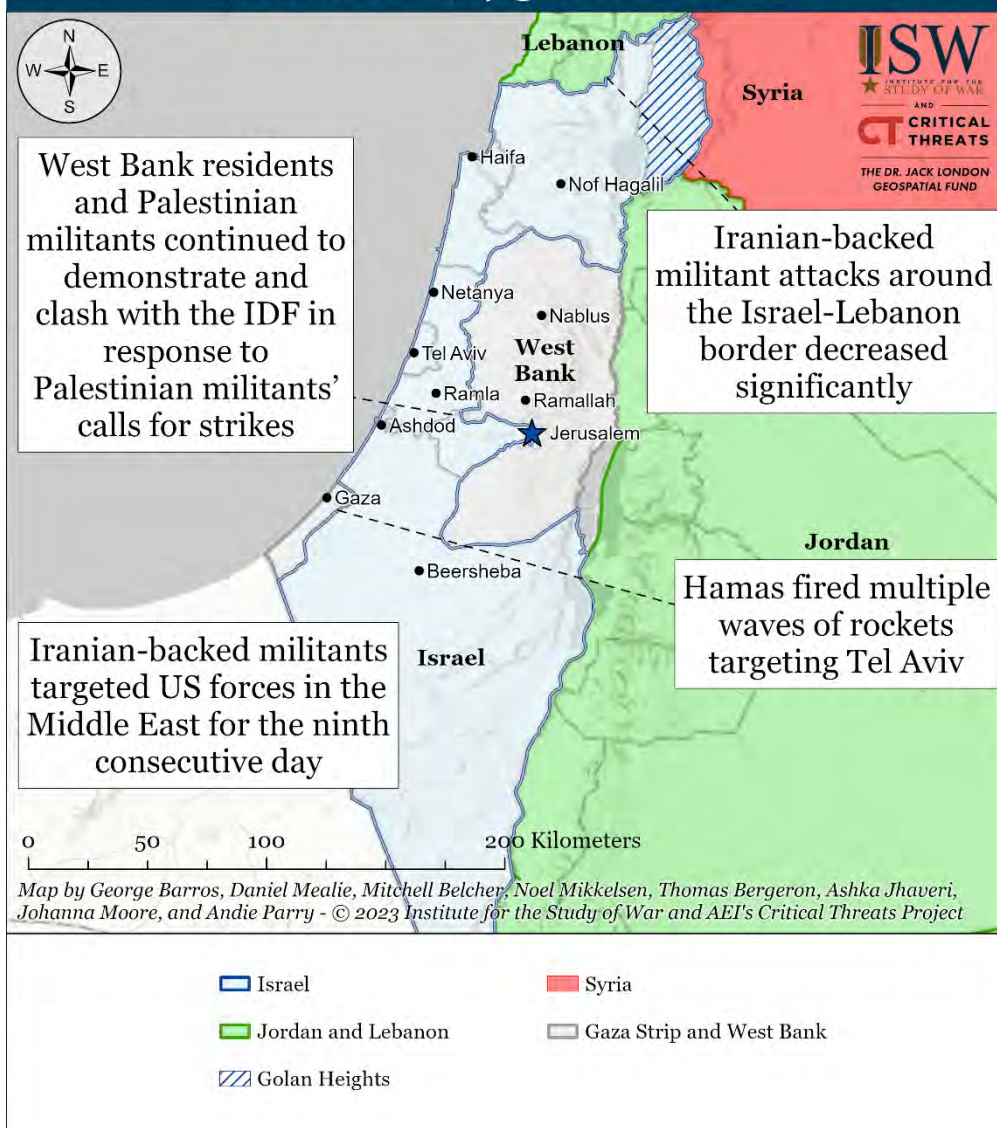
The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the 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. Palestinian militias continued attacks at their usual rate from the Gaza Strip into Israel. The IDF conducted a raid into the Gaza Strip, which Israeli media framed as preparation for the ground operation.
2. Clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants and anti-Israel protests continued at their usual rate in the West Bank. The Lions' Den released a statement indicating increasing alignment with Hamas.
3. Iranian-backed militant attacks around the Israel-Lebanon border decreased significantly. The IDF is conducting daily airstrikes against LH and Palestinian militia targets along the northern Israeli border, which may have contributed to the reduced rate of attacks.
4. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed three attacks on US military positions in Iraq and Syria.
5. A senior Hamas delegation traveled to Moscow and met with Russian and Iranian officials.
6. Iranian officials and media are dismissing US calls for Iran and the Axis of Resistance to show restraint in the Hamas-Israel war. The narrative that Iran cannot control its proxy and partner militias in the Axis of Resistance is an Iranian information operation meant to generate plausible deniability for Iranian-led actions in the Middle East and obfuscate Tehran's responsibility.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 26, 3:00 PM ET



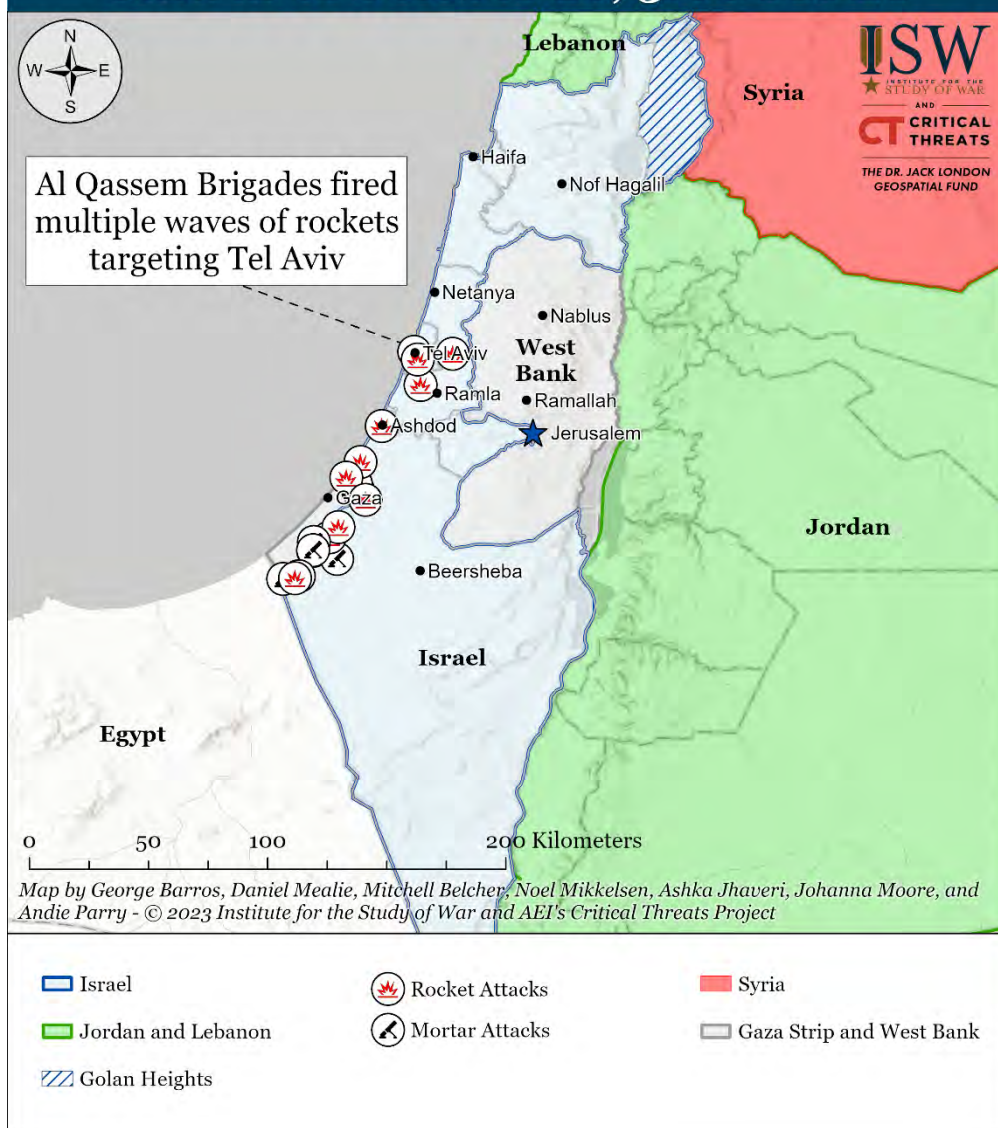
Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Erode the will of 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

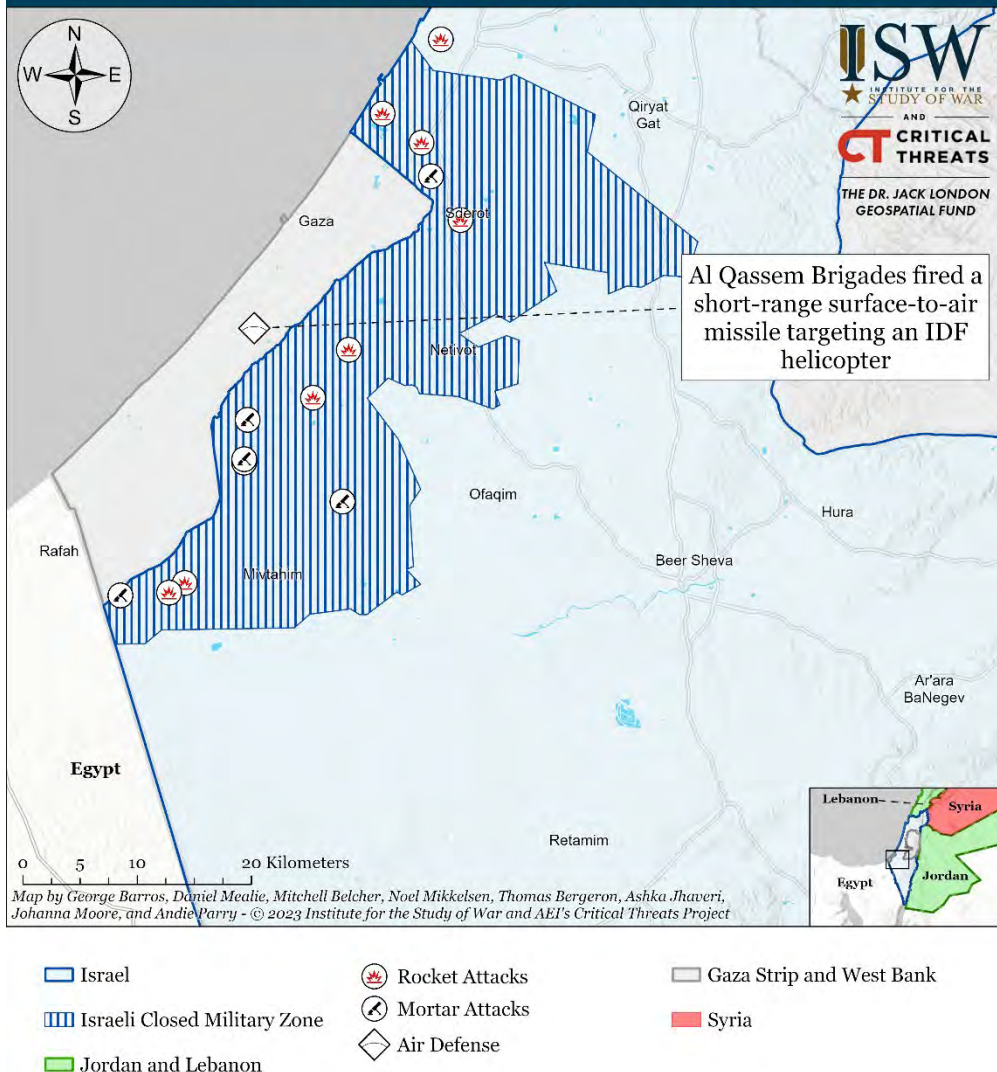
Palestinian militias continued attacks at their usual rate from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 26. The al Qassem Brigades—Hamas' militant wing—claimed responsibility for 10 indirect fire attacks.[1] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for five mortar and rocket attacks.[2] The al Aqsa Matyrs' Brigade, which claims it is affiliated with Fatah, claimed responsibility for one rocket attack.[3] Fatah denies that it has any connection to the al Aqsa Matyrs' Brigade, however. The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades—the militant wing of Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—claimed responsibility for two rocket attacks.[4] Axis of Resistance-affiliated media reported five other unclaimed mortar and rocket attacks.[5]

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 26, 3:00 PM ET



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

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 26, 3:00 PM ET



*Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.
Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip*

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reaffirmed that the IDF will conduct a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip and described its objectives in a televised speech on October 25.[6] Netanyahu stated that the operation is meant to “eliminate Hamas by destroying its military and governance capabilities and to do everything possible to get our hostages back.” Netanyahu did not specify when the operation would begin.

The IDF conducted a raid into the Gaza Strip on October 26, which Israeli media framed as preparation for the ground operation.[7] The IDF Givati Brigade deployed an armored company equipped with bulldozers for the raid.[8] An IDF spokesperson stated that the unit “eliminated terrorists, neutralized threats, dismantled explosives, [and] neutralized ambushes” during the raid.[9] Palestinian anti-tank elements attempted to fire on the IDF unit, and the IDF tanks returned fire and destroyed the anti-tank elements, according to local Israeli sources.[10]

Iranian state media responded to the raid by pushing the false narrative that Palestinian militants forced the IDF to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.[11] US military doctrine defines a raid as “an operation to temporarily

seize an area in order to secure information, confuse an enemy, capture personnel or equipment, or to destroy a capability culminating with a planned withdrawal.”[12] The IDF withdrawal after the operation is consistent with the US military doctrinal definition of a raid, which includes a planned retrograde at the end of the mission.

IDF airstrikes continue to attrit Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip. The IDF reported on October 26 that it killed the deputy head of Hamas’ intelligence department.[13] The IDF stated that the deputy head helped plan the October 7 attack with other senior Hamas officials. The IDF reported that it killed the commander and deputy commander of the al Qassem Brigades’ Darj Tafah battalion in Gaza city.[14] The IDF announced that it killed a battalion commander in the al Qassem Brigades in Khan Younis on October 25.[15]

West Bank

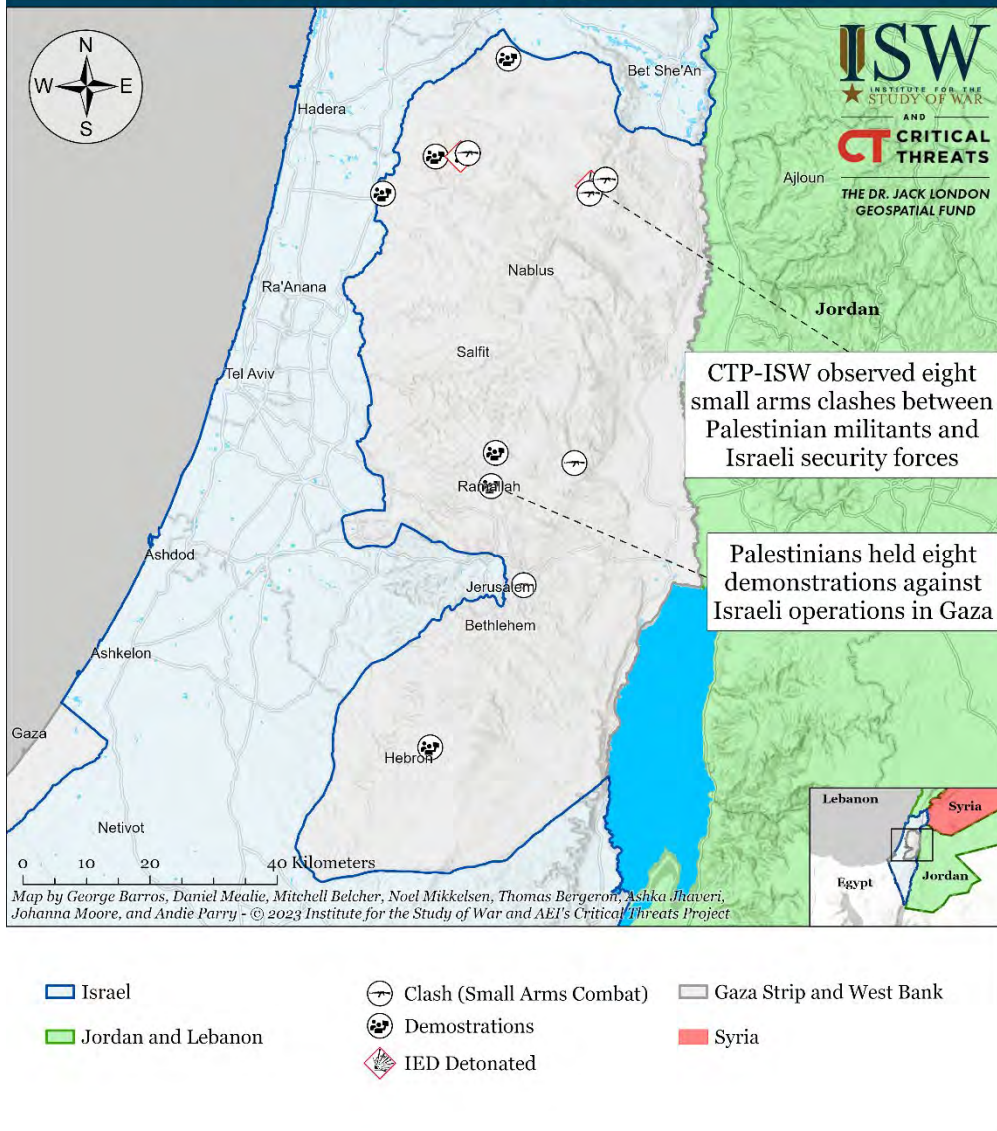
Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Draw IDF assets and resources toward the West Bank and fix them there.
Clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants and anti-Israel protests continued at their usual rate in the West Bank on October 26.[16] CTP-ISW recorded five small arms clashes and eight protests.[17] This rate of activity follows a brief uptick in anti-Israel activity in the West Bank on October 25.[18] The Lions’ Den—a West Bank-based Palestinian militia—appeared to trigger this brief uptick as it released a statement calling for mobilization on October 24.[19]

The Lions’ Den released a statement indicating increasing alignment with Hamas on October 26. The group called for a general business strike throughout the West Bank and described itself as “a sword in the hand of Commander Mohammad Deif,” who is the head of Hamas’ al Qassem Brigades.[20] This framing marks a departure from previous Lions’ Den claims that the group is not affiliated with any specific Palestinian faction.[21] The statement also marks a departure from previous Lions’ Den calls for mobilization because it refers to the entire West Bank rather than specific locations.[22] The timing of this statement is noteworthy for several reasons:

- The statement coincides with additional Hamas calls for further escalation against Israel in the West Bank.[23] This apparent alignment comes after CTP-ISW observed indications that Hamas and the Lions’ Den were struggling to coordinate their efforts in the West Bank during the early days of the war.[24]
- The statement comes after Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, and PIJ held a coordination and planning meeting in Beirut on October 24.[25] CTP-ISW is considering the hypothesis that this meeting has prompted a change in Palestinian militant behavior in the West Bank.
- The statement comes after Netanyahu reaffirmed on October 25 that the IDF will imminently conduct a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip to destroy Hamas’ “military and governance capabilities.”[26] The fact that Palestinian militias, especially Hamas, rely on public calls for escalation in the West Bank indicates that these groups lack the necessary chain of command and organization to do so covertly. Hamas has demonstrated that it can organize coordinated efforts in the Gaza Strip because it has organizational infrastructure there through which Hamas leaders can communicate instructions and orders.

Clashes in the West Bank as of October 26, 3:00 PM ET



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

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

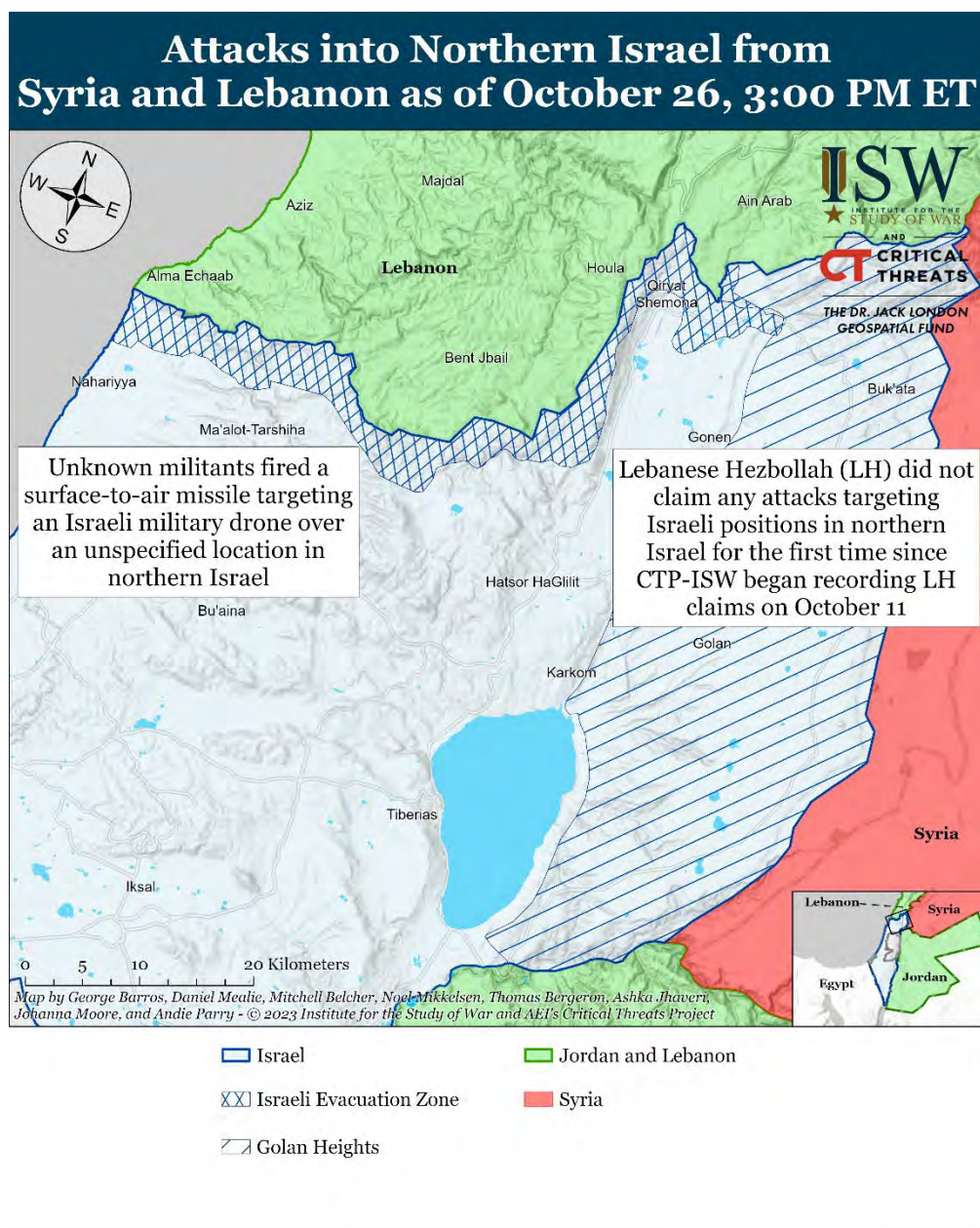
Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

Iranian-backed militant attacks around the Israel-Lebanon border decreased significantly on October 26. Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) did not claim any attacks on Israeli targets for the first time since CTP-ISW began recording LH claims on October 11.[27] Unspecified militants fired a surface-to-air missile targeting an IDF drone.[28] This single attack marks a noteworthy decrease from the six Iranian-backed attacks that CTP-ISW recorded on October 25.[29]

The IDF is conducting daily airstrikes against LH and Palestinian militia targets along the northern Israeli border, which may have contributed to the reduced rate of attacks.[30] LH acknowledged that IDF airstrikes have killed at least 44 of its fighters since October 9, including 30 fighters since October 21.[31] Israeli airstrikes specifically targeting LH anti-tank guided missile cells on October 25 killed eight LH fighters before they could fire their missiles and hit Israeli targets.[32]

It is noteworthy that the decreased rate of attacks occurred immediately after LH Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah held a coordination and planning meeting with Hamas Deputy Political Bureau Chairman Saleh al Arouri and PIJ Secretary General Ziyad al Nakhalah in Beirut on October 24.[33]



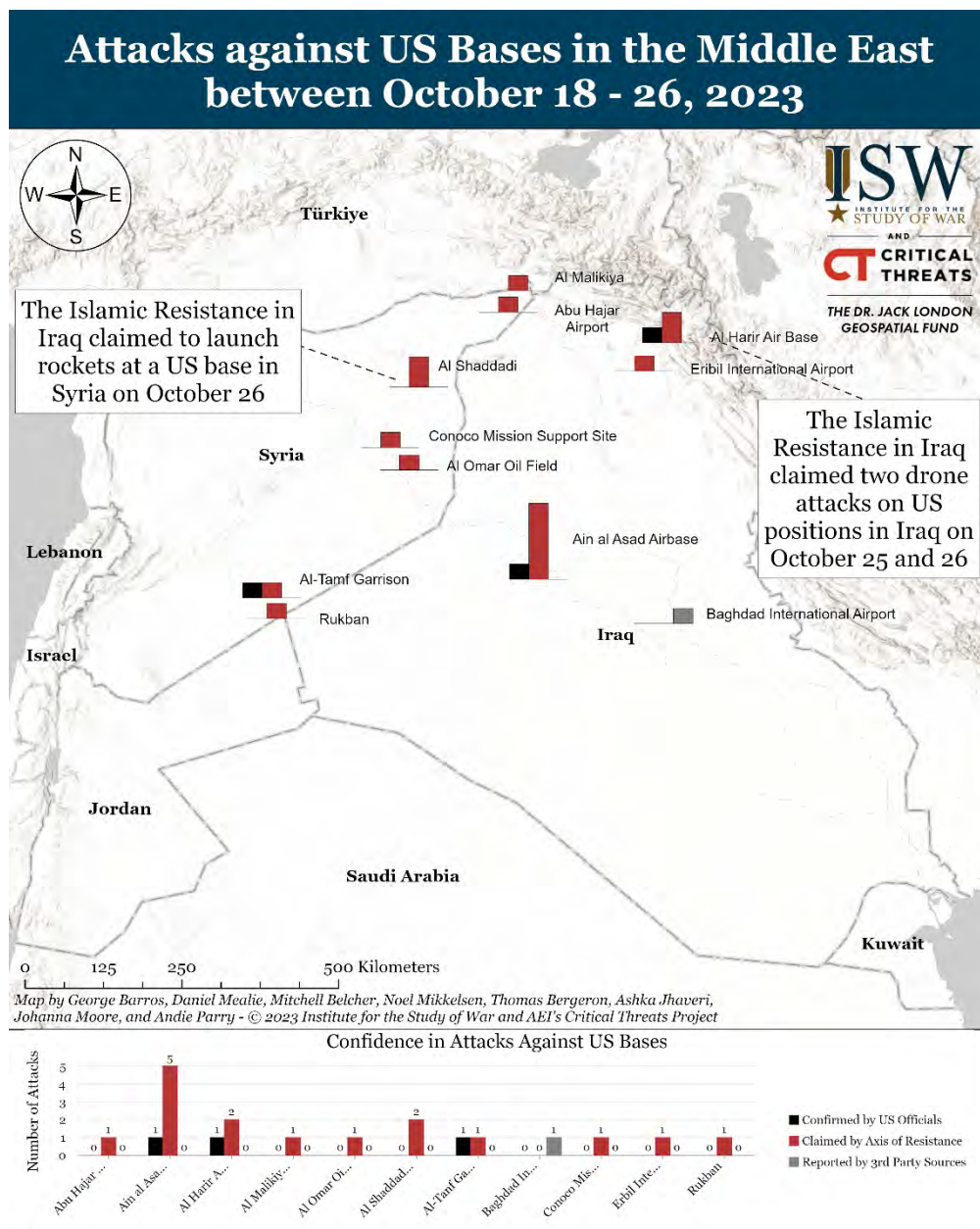
Iran and Axis of Resistance

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 Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed three attacks on US military positions in Iraq and Syria. The group conducted one-way drone attacks on US positions at Ain al Asad airbase and Erbil International Airport on October 25 and 26.[34] The group also conducted a rocket attack on a US base near Hasakah in northeastern Syria on October 26.[35] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed 20 of the 22 reported attacks on US forces in the Middle East since October 18. The US force presence in Iraq and Syria is essential to US efforts to counter ISIS.

Iranian-backed Iraqi militia leaders from the Islamic Resistance in Iraq reaffirmed on October 26 their commitment to waging a long-term fight against the United States, indicating that the group will conduct additional attacks in the coming days. Kataib Hezbollah (KH) leader Abdul Ali al Askari stated that the group is prepared to fight the United States "for years." [36] Asaib Ahl al Haq leader Qais Khazali stated that Iraqi militias are attacking the United States for its support for Israel. [37]



A senior Hamas delegation traveled to Moscow and met with Russian and Iranian officials on October 26. [38] Hamas' International Relation Office head and political bureau member Musa Abu Marzouk led the delegation, which also included Health Minister of the Gaza Strip Basem Naim. [39] The delegation held a joint meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister and Special Representative for the Middle East Mikhail Bogdanov and Iranian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Bagheri Kani. Hamas leaders issued statements around the visit praising Russia's stance toward the Israel-Hamas war. Russia has framed itself as a possible mediator between Israel and Hamas and submitted a UN resolution calling for a humanitarian ceasefire on October 16. The UN resolution failed to mention Hamas by name. [40] The Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry condemned Russia's invitation to Hamas on October 26. [41] CTP-ISW previously assessed that the

Kremlin is already exploiting and will likely continue to exploit the Israel-Hamas war to advance several information operations intended to reduce US and Western support for and attention to Ukraine.[42] A senior Hamas delegation most recently visited Moscow in March 2023 amid strained tensions between Russia and Israel over the Russian invasion of Ukraine.[43]

Iranian officials and media are dismissing US calls for Iran and the Axis of Resistance to show restraint in the Hamas-Israel war. The Biden administration has sent Iran at least two messages since October 7, expressing its desire to avoid a regional war and calling on Iran to show restraint and to urge its proxy militias to do the same.[44] US President Joe Biden also issued a direct warning to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on October 25, stating that the United States will respond to continued attacks on US forces in the Middle East.[45] Iranian Vice President for Political Affairs Mohammad Jamshidi dismissed the Biden administration's messages, describing the warnings against regional escalation as "nothing but requests." [46] An unidentified source separately told Iranian state media on October 26 that the United States' supply of military equipment to Israel contradicts US calls for restraint.[47] The source added that Iran cannot "order or forbid regional resistance groups [from acting]." [48]

The narrative that Iran cannot control its proxy and partner militias in the Axis of Resistance is an Iranian information operation meant to generate plausible deniability for Iranian-led actions in the Middle East and obfuscate Tehran's responsibility.[49] This narrative has repeatedly proven false.

- CTP-ISW reported in June 2023, for example, that Iraqi proxies stopped threatening to attack US forces following IRGC Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani's visit to Baghdad that month.[50] The cessation of proxy threats suggested that Ghaani had directed the proxies to deescalate.
- Khatam ol Anbia Central Headquarters Commander Major General Gholam Ali Rashid stated on October 26 that the Axis of Resistance in the "north, east, and south" of Israel would support Hamas in the event of an Israeli ground operation into the Gaza Strip.[51] Rashid is a member of Iran's IRGC command network, a small group of senior leaders who dominate the IRGC and have close connections stemming from the Iran-Iraq War.[52] Rashid has personal connections to other senior members of Iran's military leadership, such as former IRGC Commander Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari.[53] The Khatam ol Anbia Central Headquarters is the highest Iranian operational headquarters and is responsible for wartime operations. The headquarters, along with the Armed Forces General Staff, commands, controls, coordinates, and supports the three branches of Iran's armed forces.[54] The commanders of these branches—the Artesh, IRGC, and Law Enforcement Command—relay orders from the Khatam ol Anbia Central Headquarters to their operational forces.[55] Statements by Rashid carry more weight than those by IRGC officers in lesser posts.
- Iran has facilitated the expansion of the Hamas-Israel war since October 7. Iran has directed its proxy and partner militias in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen to attack US and Israeli targets.[56] The militias have used weapons supplied by Iran in some of their attacks on US military positions.[57] Iran has historically provided extensive material and financial support as well as training to its proxies in the region. The *Washington Post* reported on October 9 that Iran provided Hamas fighters with training and weapons prior to the October 7 attack.[58] The IRGC Quds Force has separately coordinated the deployment of hundreds of Iranian-backed militants in southern Lebanon and southwestern Syria since the war began.[59] These militants include military engineers and missile experts, among others.[60] Israel has furthermore conducted several airstrikes on the Damascus and Aleppo international airports since October 12 and indicated that the airstrikes are meant to prevent Iran from moving weapons into Syria and/or opening a front against Israel from there.[61]

Iran's claims are part of its ongoing information operation to deflect responsibility for any further escalation of the conflict away from Iran. The Iranian regime has repeatedly accused the United States of aggravating the conflict while framing itself as a promoter of peace. Iran has additionally set informational conditions to blame the United States and Israel for any further escalation of the war and deflect any responsibility from itself, as CTP-ISW previously reported.[62]

[1] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/51> ; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/52> ; ...

[2] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16465> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16470> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16470> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16470> ; ...

[3] <https://t.me/AymanGouda/5801>

[4] <https://t.me/almanarnews/132997> ; <https://t.me/almanarnews/133124>

- [5] https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/36816 ; <https://t.me/almanarnews/132956...>
- [6] <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-following-war-everyone-will-have-to-answer-for-failures-including-me/>
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- [20] <https://t.me/areennabluss/288>
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- [22] <https://t.me/areennabluss/236>, <https://t.me/areennabluss/249>, <https://...>
- [23] https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/36744; <https://almanar dot com dot lb/11127327>
- [24] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-11-2023>
- [25] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-25-2023>
- [26] <https://www dot timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-following-war-everyone-will-have-to-answer-for-failures-including-me/>
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- [34] https://twitter.com/no_itsmyturn/status/1717349699940688179; <https://tw...> <https://twitter.com/JoeTruzman/status/1717603776981606463>
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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 27, 2023

Iran Update, October 27, 2023

Andie Parry, Ashka Jhaveri, Annika Ganzeveld, Brian Carter, and Peter Mills

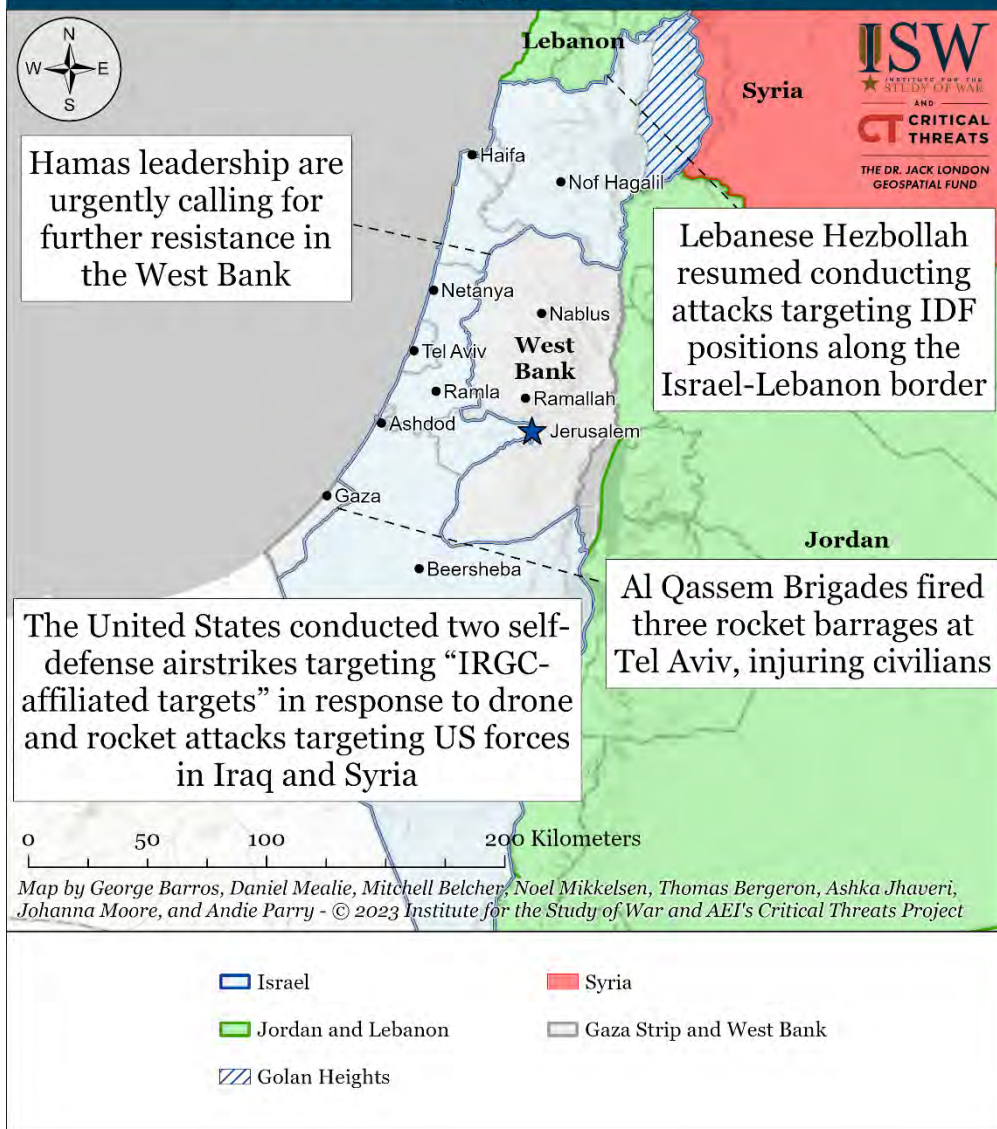
The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the 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. Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted rocket attacks into Israel at roughly half their usual rate on October 27.
2. The IDF conducted five raids into the Gaza Strip on October 27, and IDF ground forces will expand their operations overnight.
3. Palestinian militants clashed with Israeli security forces across the West Bank at a higher rate on October 27, amid Israeli arrest raids.
4. Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), resumed attacks as part of an ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets.
5. The United States conducted two self-defense airstrikes targeting "IRGC-affiliated targets" in response to drone and rocket attacks against US forces in Iraq and Syria.
6. The Iran-backed Houthi movement conducted a drone attack targeting southern Israel on October 27.
7. Iran and its Axis of Resistance are continuing to signal their willingness and capability to escalate against the United States and Israel from multiple fronts.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 27, 3:00 PM ET



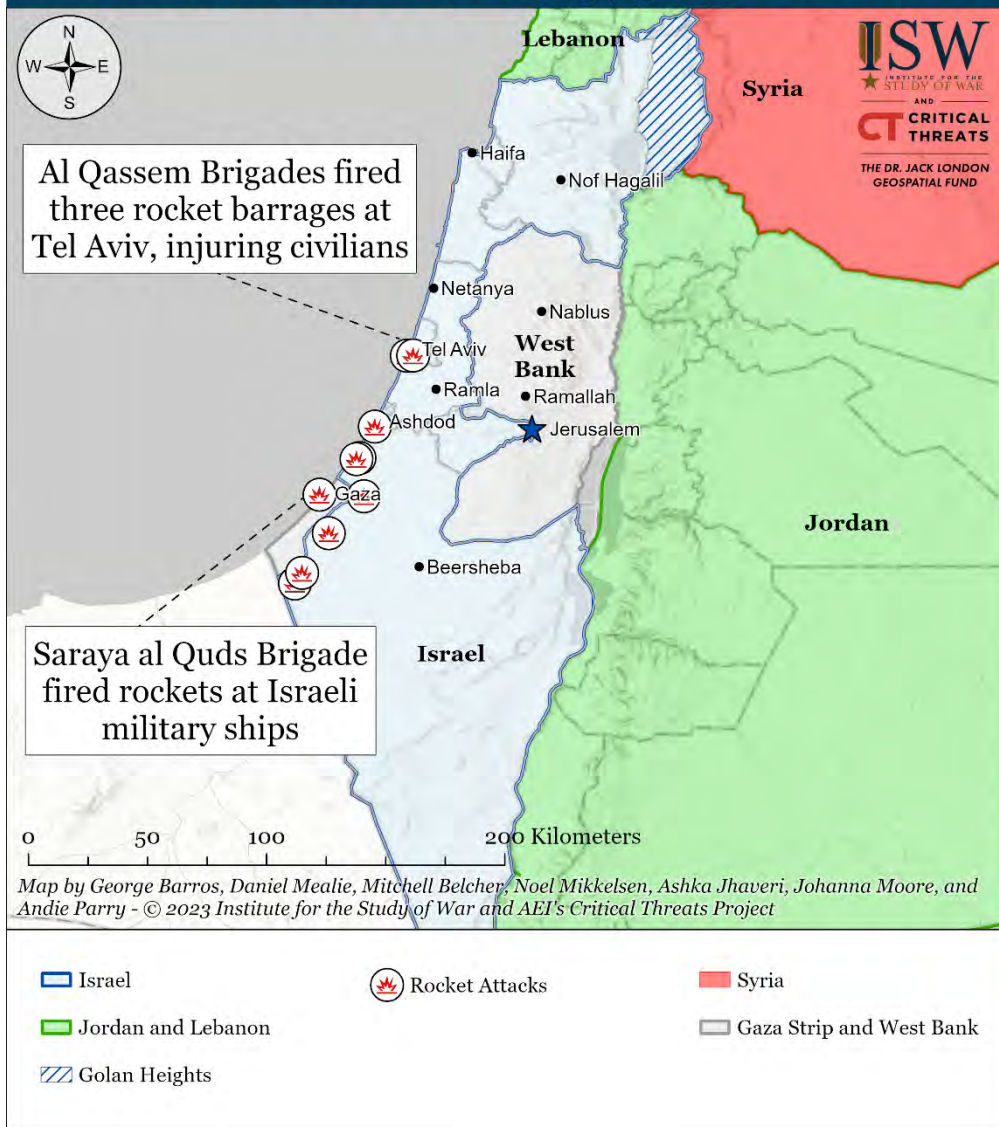
Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Erode the will of 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

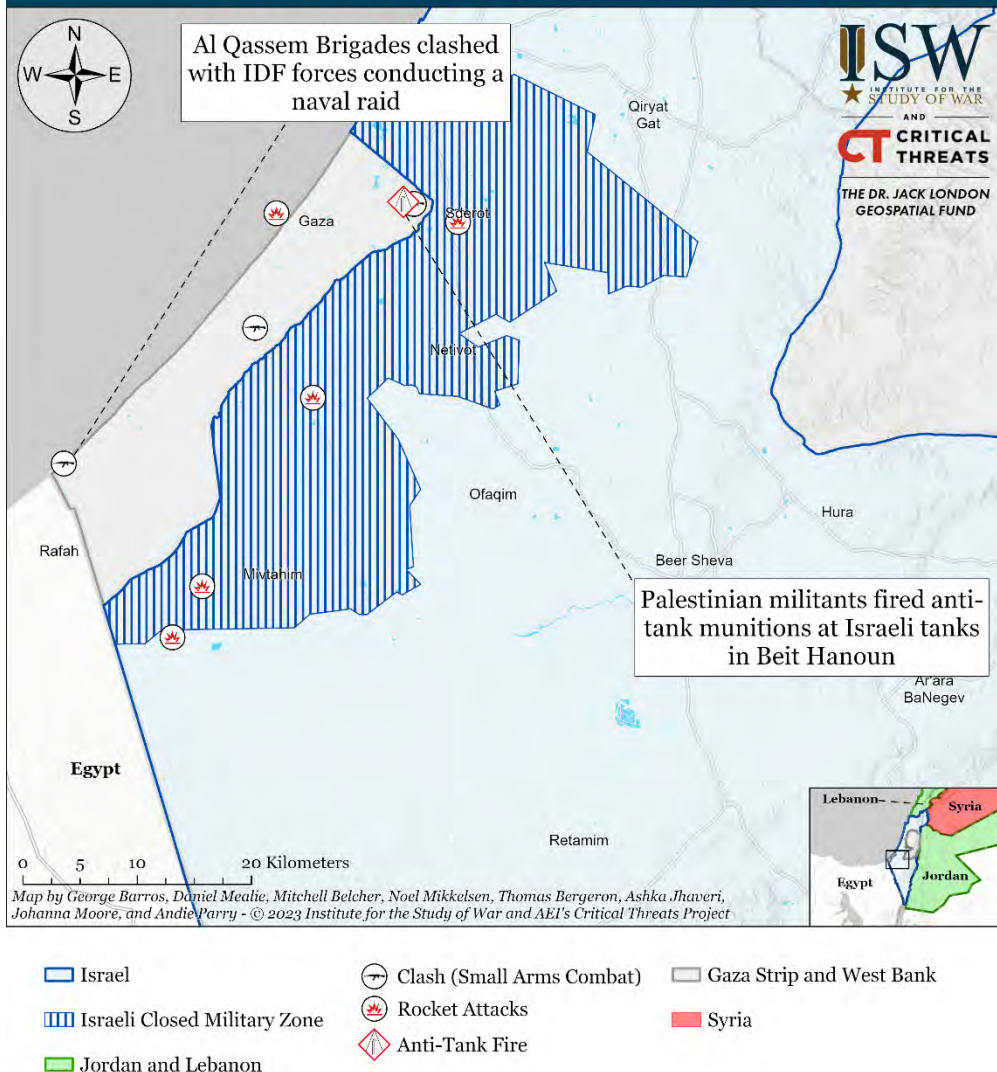
Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted rocket attacks into Israel at roughly half their usual rate on October 27.[1] The al Qassem Brigades—Hamas’ militant wing—claimed responsibility for five indirect fire attacks.[2] Three of these attacks targeted Tel Aviv and injured several Israeli civilians there.[3] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for six rocket attacks, including an attack using a Badr-3 rocket on Ashkelon.[4] The Badr-3 rocket is produced in Gaza and has a 400 kilogram warhead, whereas Palestinian militias most frequently fire Qassem rockets with five kilograms of explosives.[5] Axis of Resistance-affiliated media reported one unclaimed anti-tank munition attack on Israeli forces.[6]

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 27, 3:00 PM ET



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

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 27, 3:00 PM ET



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

Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

The IDF conducted five raids into the Gaza Strip on October 27, and IDF ground forces will expand their operations overnight.[7] The IDF 13th Fleet deployed a tactical unit, ships, and aircraft in a naval raid on Rafah beach in the southern Gaza Strip on October 27.[8] An IDF spokesperson stated that the unit "destroyed terrorist infrastructures of the Hamas terrorist organization and operated in a compound used by the organization's naval commando forces." [9] The IDF 36th Division also conducted a raid into central Gaza near Shujayyah using infantry, armor, and engineering units supported by helicopter gunships.[10] The IDF stated the Shujayyah operation had dozens of targets including anti-tank guided missile launch positions and Hamas operational headquarters and militants.[11] Axis media and social media users reported three other armed clashes between Palestinian militias and IDF troops in central and northern Gaza.[12] The IDF spokesperson disclosed IDF group operations in the Gaza Strip will intensify overnight.[13]

The al Qassem Brigades and Axis media incorrectly framed the naval raid engagement as a success for its militants by claiming they forced an IDF withdrawal and air engagement.[14] US military doctrine defines a raid as "an operation to temporarily seize an area in order to secure information, confuse an enemy, capture personnel or equipment, or to destroy a capability culminating with a planned

withdrawal.”[15] The IDF withdrawal after the operation is consistent with the US military doctrinal definition of a raid, which includes a planned retrograde at the end of the mission. The IDF used air support to assist their elements’ withdrawal during the naval raid.[16]

West Bank

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

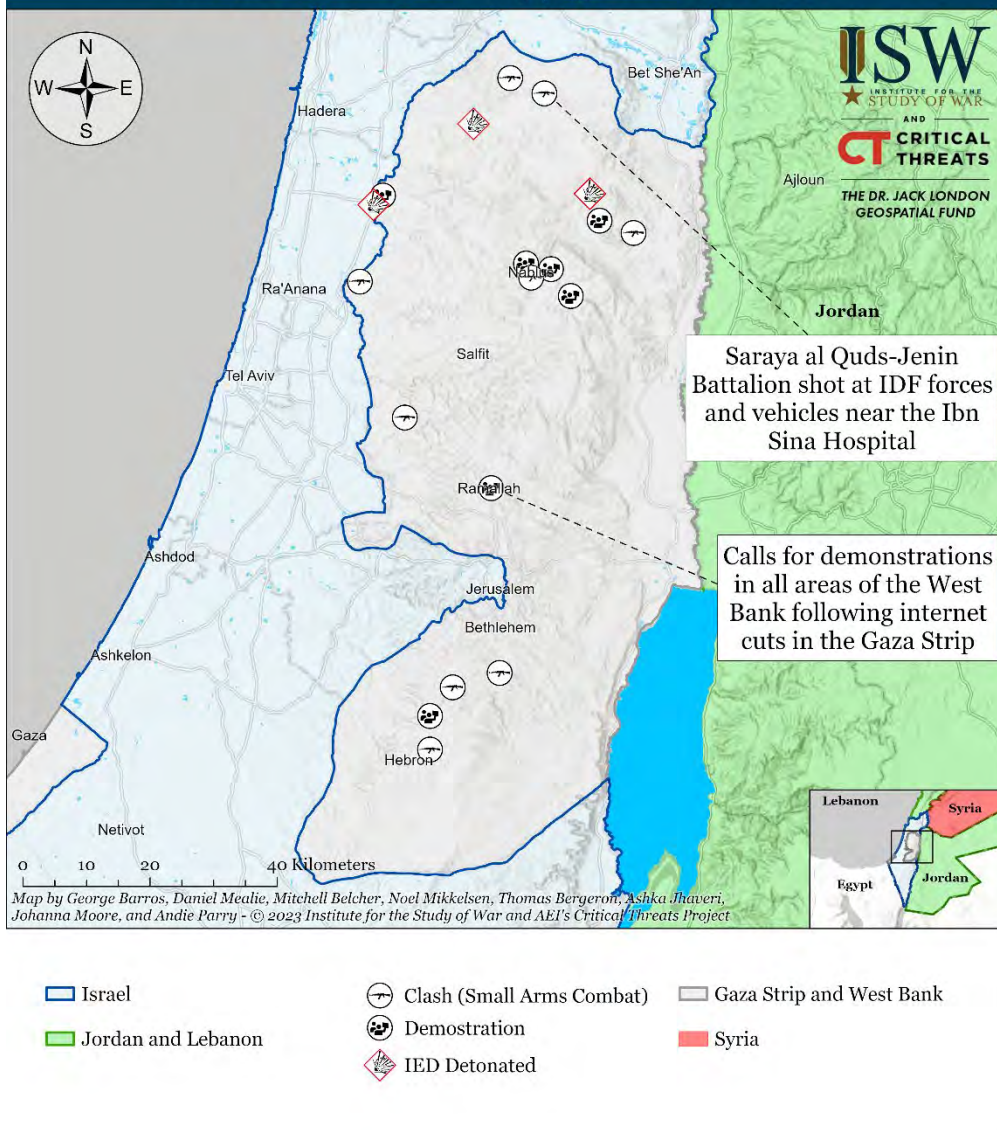
Hamas leadership is urgently calling for further resistance in the West Bank. Hamas Political Bureau leader Ismail Haniyeh called for louder condemnation of Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.[17] Haniyeh claimed on October 7 that the Al Aqsa Flood Operation began in the Gaza Strip and will extend to the West Bank.[18] A cybersecurity monitoring group said it had observed the largest single internet disruption in the Gaza Strip since hostilities began, amounting to a “total or near total blackout of internet service.”[19] Hamas Political Bureau member Hussam Badran made an urgent appeal to people in the West Bank that “this is the time for weapons.”[20]

Hamas and PIJ claimed their militants died while confronting IDF forces in Jenin. Saraya al Quds mourned a prominent field commander in its Jenin Battalion who died “supporting Gaza” in Jenin.[21] Hamas mourned three militants who died in clashes in the West Bank in Jenin and Qalqiya.[22] Ismail Haniyeh noted that the martyrs of the al Qassem Brigades are the same as Saraya al Quds Brigades and LH throughout the country in a speech on October 26.[23]

Palestinian militants clashed with Israeli security forces across the West Bank at a higher rate on October 27, amid Israeli arrest raids. The IDF, Shin Bet, and Border Police forces arrested 36 Palestinians, including 17 Hamas operatives, in the West Bank. Israel is dismantling Hamas and PIJ command structures in the West Bank.[24] The Palestinian Authority reported that four Palestinians died overnight during Israeli raids in the West Bank.[25]

- ISW recorded 14 distinct clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces across the West Bank. Saraya Al Quds-Tubas Brigade used an explosive device during clashes with IDF forces in Tubas.[26] CTP-ISW recorded two other instances of Palestinians using IEDs in the northern West Bank.[27]
- CTP-ISW recorded eight anti-Israel demonstrations, a majority of which occurred after the internet cuts in the Gaza Strip. Hamas and the PIJ-affiliated Quds News Network reported on their Telegram pages that there are calls for marches in all areas of the West Bank and Jerusalem following the interruption of communication in the Gaza Strip.[28] Palestinians in Ramallah chanted “if you have a rifle, you should either kill a Jew or give it to Hamas.”[29]

Clashes in the West Bank as of October 27, 3:00 PM ET



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

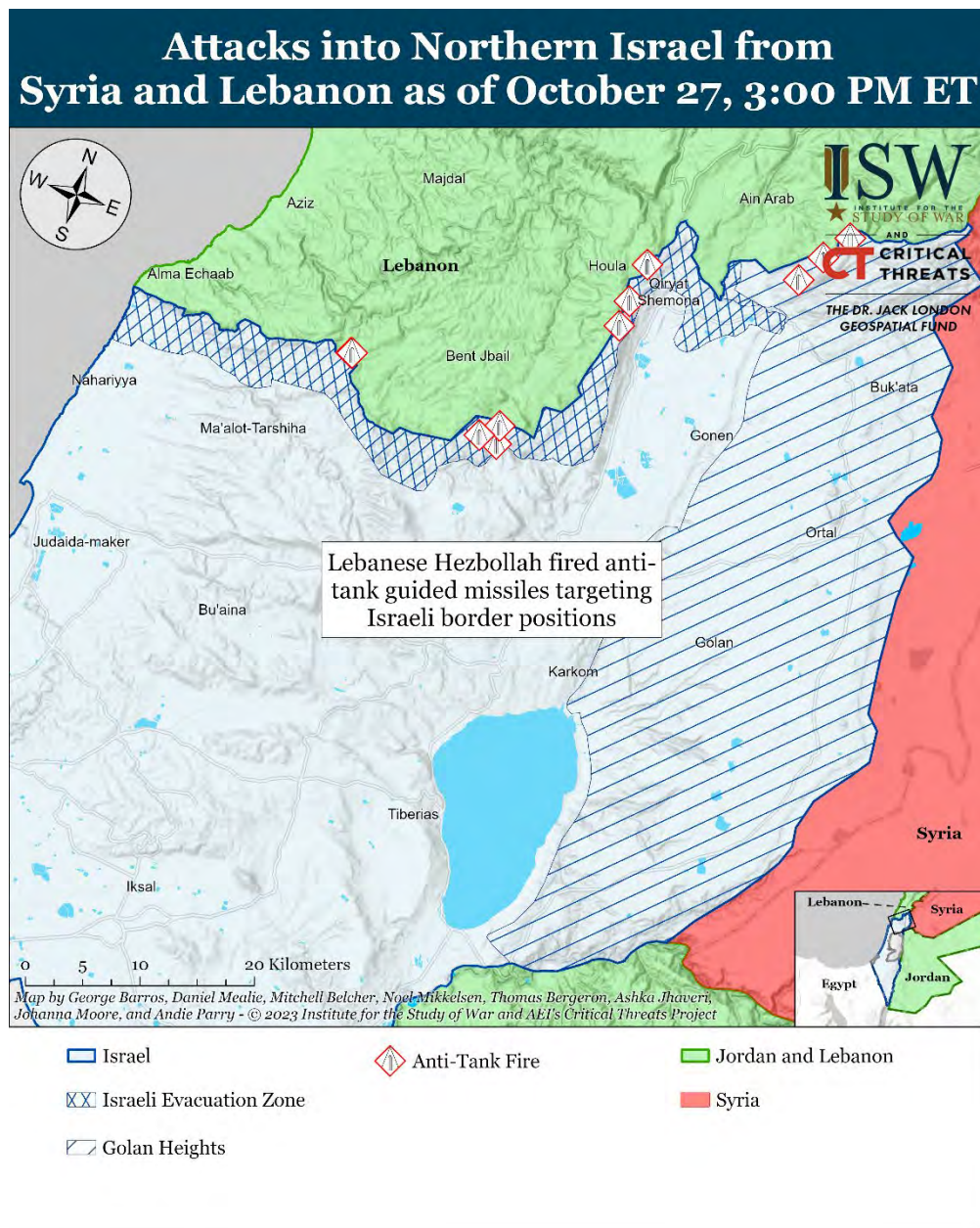
Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), resumed attacks as part of an ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets. LH claimed six anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) attacks on IDF positions along the border with Lebanon on October 27. This is consistent with its rate of attacks prior to October 26.[30] LH did not claim any attacks on October 26 for the first time since CTP-ISW began recording LH claims on October 11.[31] IDF forces responded to the ATGM attacks with artillery fire targeting locations in southern Lebanon where militants had fired into Israel.[32] LH

claimed its attacks inflicted "confirmed casualties", but the IDF denied that it suffered any casualties.[33] LH has acknowledged that at least 44 of its fighters have died since October 9 due to Israeli attacks responding to LH attacks on IDF forces and Israeli communities along the Lebanese border.[34]



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

Iran and Axis of Resistance

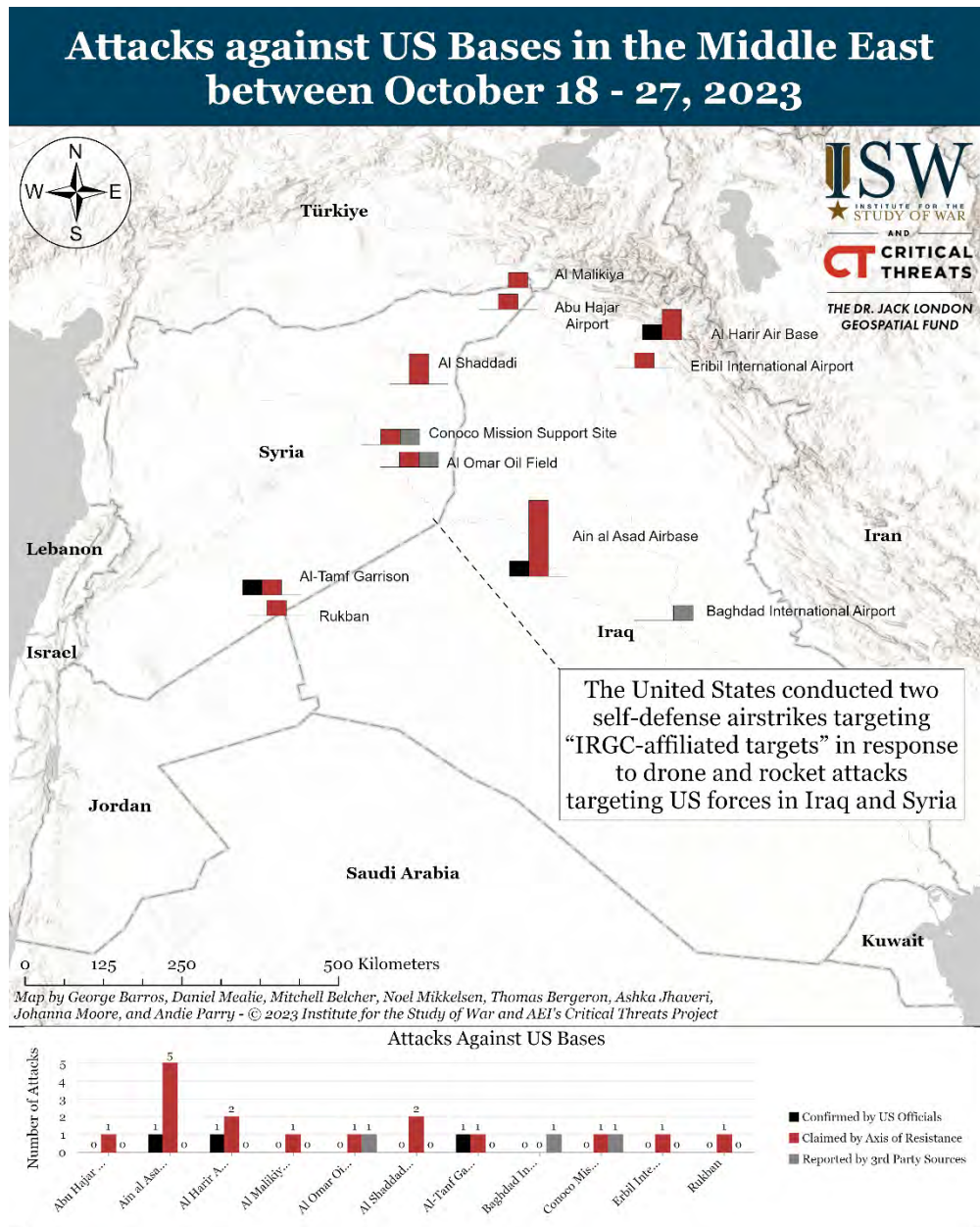
Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- 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 United States conducted two self-defense airstrikes targeting "IRGC-affiliated targets" in response to drone and rocket attacks against US forces in Iraq and Syria.[35] The United States targeted weapons and an ammunition storage facility near Albu Kamal, Syria.[36] US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin highlighted Iran's role in attacks against US forces in his statement acknowledging the US airstrikes.[37] A US defense official said that the United States selected the targets to "send a message" to

militia groups while “mitigating the risk of escalation.”[38] A local Syrian opposition outlet reported that the airstrike targeted a building used to “hold meetings and receive people coming from Iraq.”[39] It added that the last meeting was held a “few days ago” with “leaders” from the IRGC.[40] The same source reported no casualties in the airstrikes.[41]

The Islamic Resistance of Iraq launched one drone at US forces at Ain al Assad airbase, Iraq on October 27 in response to the US airstrikes.[42] The Islamic Resistance of Iraq claimed the attack roughly 10 hours after the US airstrikes. Iranian state media and local media reported two other rocket attacks targeting US facilities in northeastern Syria on October 26-27.[43] The United States did not confirm these attacks, nor did the Islamic Resistance of Iraq claim the attacks.



The Iran-backed Houthi movement conducted a drone attack targeting southern Israel on October 27.[44] The IDF said that it intercepted an “unknown aerial target” over the Red Sea on October 27.[45] At least two unspecified drones originating in the “Red Sea area” struck Egyptian territory near Taba, a resort town adjacent to Eilat, Israel, and near Nuweiba, 70 kilometers from the Israeli border.[46] The US Navy

warship USS *Carney* intercepted nearly 20 drones and missiles launched by the Houthis from Yemen on October 18.[47]

Iran and its Axis of Resistance are continuing to signal their willingness and capability to escalate against the United States and Israel from multiple fronts. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian stated in an interview with NPR on October 27 that Palestinian and Lebanese resistance groups have plans that are “more powerful and deeper than what [the United States] has witnessed.”[48] Abdollahian has previously issued similar warnings. He warned on October 14 that the Axis of Resistance has its “hands on the trigger” and will respond to Israel “at an appropriate time” if Israel continues to attack the Gaza Strip.[49] Abdollahian subsequently warned on October 16 that Iranian-backed militias would imminently take “preemptive actions” against Israel.[50] Abdollahian issued the latter warning two days before Iranian-backed Iraqi militias conducted attacks on US forces in Iraq on October 18. These attacks marked the first attacks on US forces in the region since the start of the Hamas-Israel war on October 7. Lebanese Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem echoed Abdollahian’s warnings on October 27, stating that the United States and Israel “do not know what the days will hold” if Israel continues its attacks.[51] Qassem made this comment in a meeting with Iranian Parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Deputy Chairman Ebrahim Azizi in Beirut. Iranian Friday prayer leaders echoed the above rhetoric in their sermons on October 27. Tehran Interim Friday Prayer Leader Ali Akbari discussed the connected “regional resistance network” encompassing Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and Iran and warned that “everyone is ready.”[52] Mashhad Friday Prayer Leader Ahmad Alam ol Hoda separately stated that the Iranian government and people should be ready to go to the front with Israel as soon as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei issues an order to do so.[53] Alam ol Hoda’s calls for mobilization are consistent with previous regime efforts to generate momentum for the Hamas-Israel war among the Iranian public, such as launching an online campaign to sign up volunteers to fight Israel.[54] CTP-ISW has previously noted that Alam ol Hoda is known for his ultra-hardline stances and provocative views, which means that his statements do not always reflect the regime’s official positions.[55] Alam ol Hoda called on vigilantes to enforce mandatory veiling in the aftermath of the 2022-2023 Mahsa Amini movement, for example.[56]

Iranian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Bagheri Kani discussed the Hamas-Israel war with Hamas’ International Relations Office head and Political Bureau member Musa Abu Marzouk in Moscow on October 27.[57] Bagheri Kani stated that Iran seeks an immediate ceasefire in the Hamas-Israel war and the provision of humanitarian aid to Gazans.[58] The official Hamas readout of the meeting notably excluded Bagheri Kani’s call for a ceasefire.[59] Marzouk told Saudi-owned Al Arabiya on October 27 that Hamas is trying to bring in all parties, including Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah, that “want to fight with us.”[60]

[1] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/66> ; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/67> ; ...

[2] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/66> ; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/67> ; ht...

[3] <https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1717875007882154024> ; <https://twit...> <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/71>

<https://t.me/sarayaps/16479> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16480> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16481> ; ...

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[6] <https://t.me/maymun5/55670>

[7] <https://twitter.com/IDFSpokesperson/status/1717956633320448215> ; <https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1717954334040768673>

[8] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1717872157726822542>

[9] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1717872157726822542>

[10] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1717770781151949034> ; <https://www...>

[11] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1717770835539251520> ; <https://twi...>

[12] <https://twitter.com/sentdefender/status/1717967067654066344> ; <https://t.me/maymun5/55500>

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[17] <https://web.telegram.org/a/#-1001004223642>

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- [19] <https://x.com/netblocks/status/1717942556703551590?s=20>; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/10/26/gaza-israel-siege-blacko...>
- [20] <https://t.me/almanarnews/133397>
- [21] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16477>
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- [23] <https://web.telegram.org/a/#-1001004223642>
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- [25] <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/israel-conducts-another-ground-raid-in-gaz...>
- [26] <https://t.me/almanarnews/133209>
- [27] <https://t.me/QudsN/319308>; <https://t.me/QudsN/319306>
- [28] <https://t.me/QudsN/319263>
- [29] <https://twitter.com/khaledabutoameh/status/1717870667285037165?s=46&t=EG...>
- [30] <https://t.me/maymun5/55585> ; <https://t.me/maymun5/55589> ; <https://t.me...>
- [31] <https://www.understandingwar.org/background/iran-update-october-26-2023>
- [32] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1717894353841008987>
- [33] <https://t.me/maymun5/55585> ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1717...>
- [34] <https://twitter.com/QalaatM/status/1717601881457897576>
- [35] <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3570798/secretary-...>
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- [40] [https://deirezzor24\(dot\)net/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%81-%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1/](https://deirezzor24(dot)net/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%81-%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1/)
- [41] [https://deirezzor24\(dot\)net/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%81-%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1/](https://deirezzor24(dot)net/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%81-%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1/)
- [42] <https://t.me/elamharbi/50>
- [43] <https://twitter.com/Tasnimarabic/status/1717896805558473006>; <https://ey...>
- [44] <https://x.com/joetruzman/status/1717997214453420300?s=46&t=EGYclyXosW6IV...>
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- [48] <https://www.npr.org/2023/10/27/1208575570/irans-foreign-minister-armed-g...>
- [49] [https://www.tasnimnews\(dot\)com/fa/news/1402/07/22/2971412](https://www.tasnimnews(dot)com/fa/news/1402/07/22/2971412)
- [50] <https://twitter.com/abasaslani/status/1714005468761161841?s=46&t=TMbDQr...>
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- [52] [https://www.tasnimnews\(dot\)com/fa/news/1402/08/05/2978791](https://www.tasnimnews(dot)com/fa/news/1402/08/05/2978791)
- [53] [https://donya-e-eqtesad\(dot\)com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%B3%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-62/4014487-%D8%A7%D8%B8%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%87%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87-](https://donya-e-eqtesad(dot)com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%B3%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-62/4014487-%D8%A7%D8%B8%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%87%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87-)

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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 28, 2023

Iran Update, October 28, 2023

Ashka Jhaveri, Andie Parry, Annika Ganzeveld, Amin Soltani, and Nicholas Carl

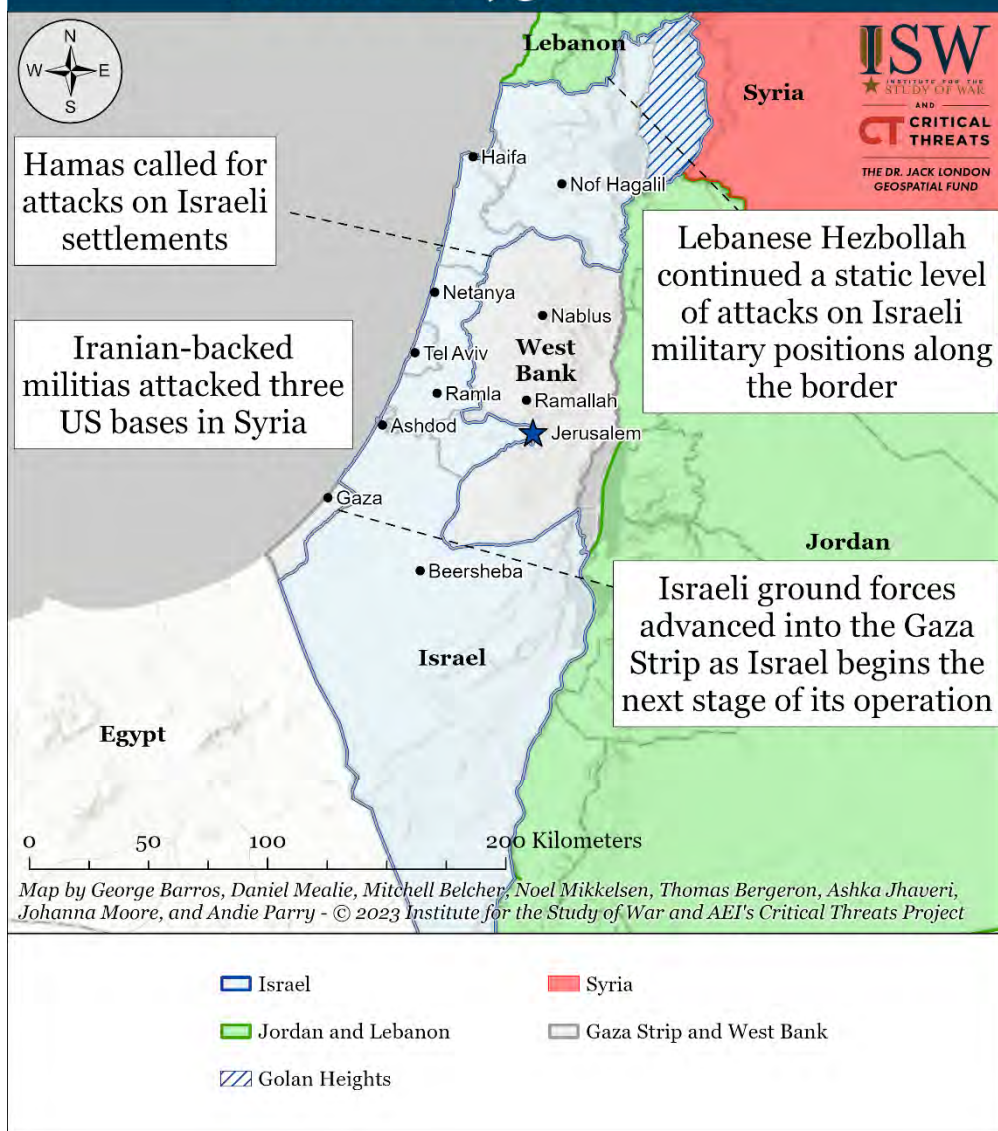
The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the 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.

Key Takeaways:

1. Palestinian militias continued attacks at their usual rate from the Gaza Strip into Israel. The al Qassem Brigades claimed to fire rockets at Dimona for the first time since the war started.
2. Israeli ground forces advanced into the Gaza Strip. The al Qassem Brigades claimed to attack advancing IDF forces in Beit Hanoun and east of Bureij. Palestinian militias, including Hamas, are framing the IDF advances into the Gaza Strip as a failure likely to encourage civilians to stay rather than try to evacuate toward the southern part of the strip.
3. The Lions' Den—a West Bank-based Palestinian militia—appeared to implicitly call for further mobilization and violence against Israel in the West Bank after the IDF conducted ground operations into the Gaza Strip. Iranian and Palestinian sources are describing Israeli settlers in the West Bank as legitimate military targets. Palestinian militants clashed with Israeli forces and held large, anti-Israel demonstrations at their usual rate across the West Bank.
4. Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted 12 attacks into Israel as part of an ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets.
5. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed to attack US forces at al Tanf Garrison in eastern Syria.
6. Iran is conducting a messaging campaign (1) to signal to the United States the potential for further Iranian-backed attacks against US forces in the region and (2) to reassure members of its Axis of Resistance, especially LH, of Iran's commitment to supporting them in the event that the United States enters the war in support of Israel.
7. IRGC-affiliated media is continuing to provide the informational cover for Iran and the Axis of Resistance to conduct attacks against US positions on the false grounds that the United States is directing Israeli operations into the Gaza Strip.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 28, 3:00 PM ET



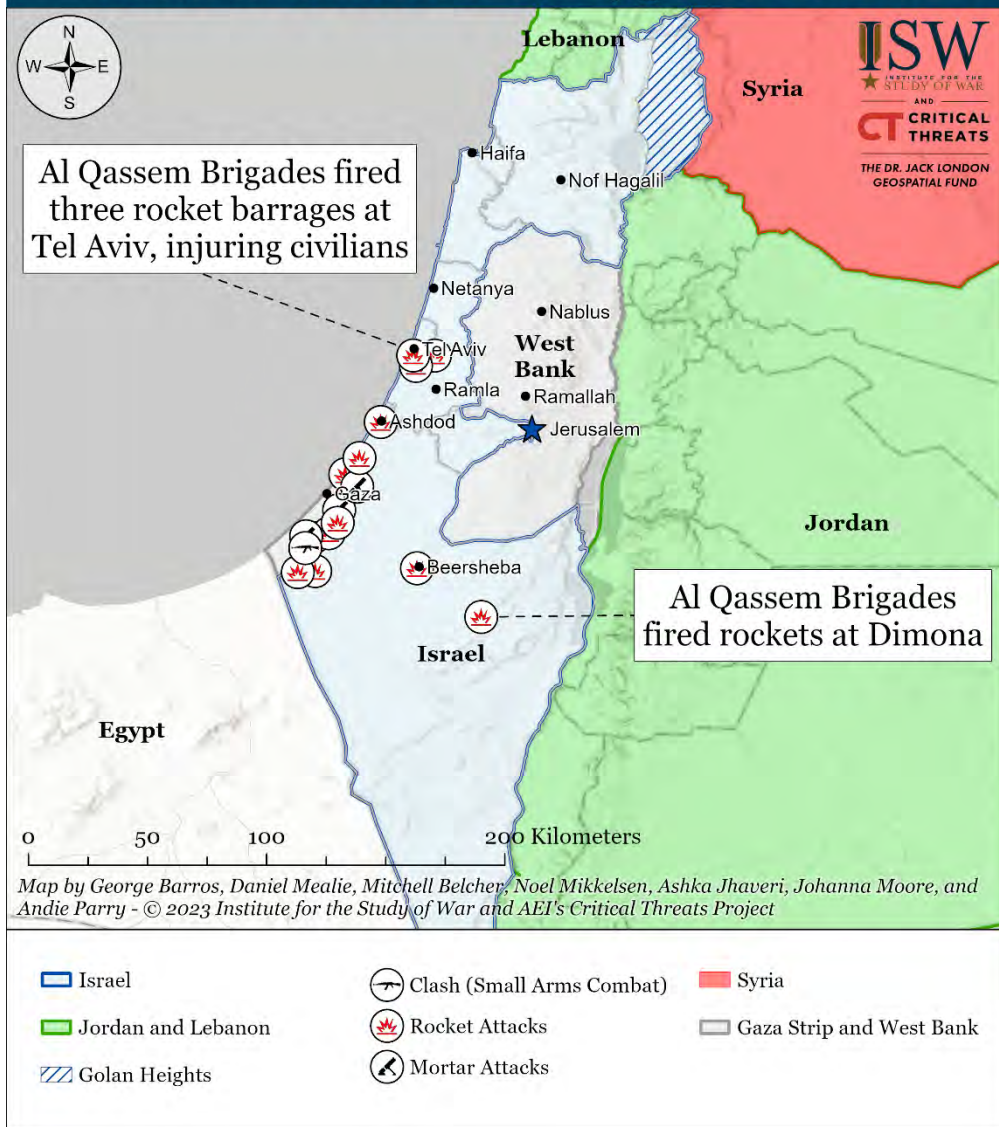
Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Erode the will of 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

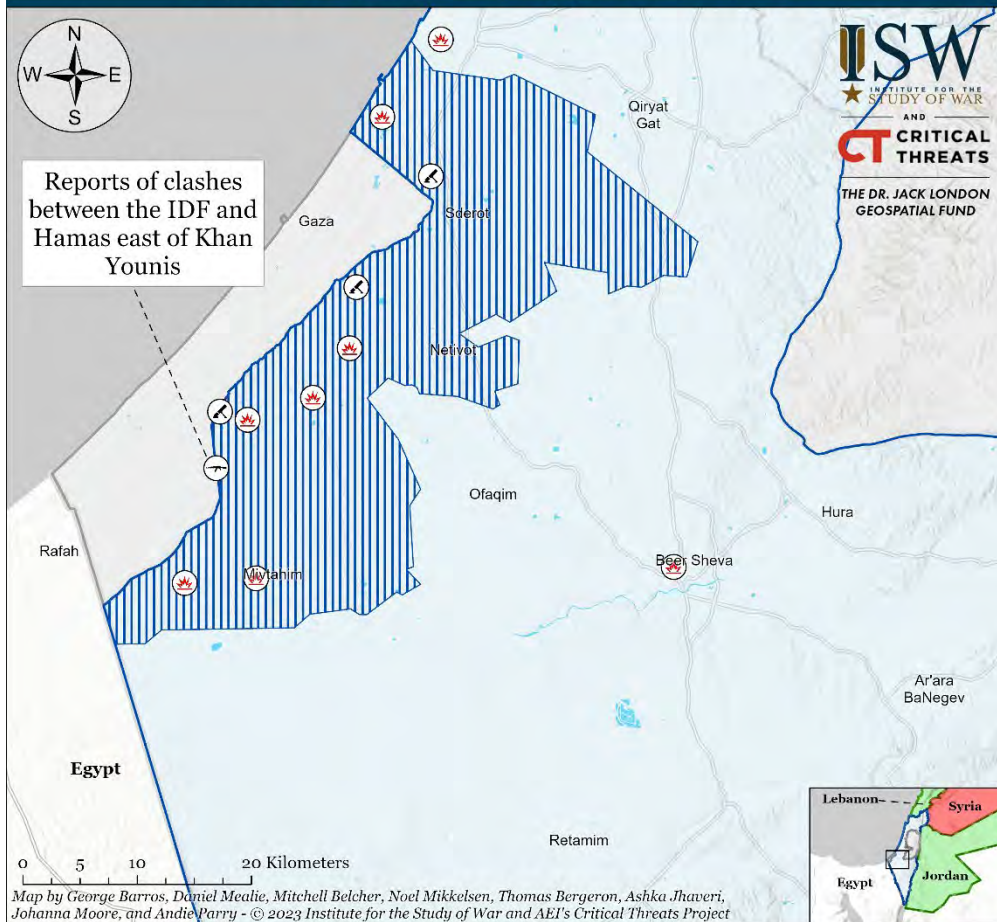
Palestinian militias continued attacks at their usual rate from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 28. The al Qassem Brigades— Hamas' militant wing—claimed responsibility for nine indirect fire attacks. The al Qassem Brigades claimed to fire rockets at Dimona for the first time since the war started.[1] Israeli news reported that the Iron Dome air defense system intercepted three of the rockets and one fell in an open area.[2] The Israeli Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center is based outside of Dimona in southern Israel.[3] Iran and its Axis of Resistance have threatened to attack the facility previously, which has prompted Israel to reinforce the reactor, according to the head of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission head.[4] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—separately claimed responsibility for nine mortar and rocket attacks.[5]

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 28, 3:00 PM ET



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

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 28, 3:00 PM ET



- Israel
- Israeli Closed Military Zone
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Clash (Small Arms Combat)
- Rocket Attacks
- Mortar Attacks
- Gaza Strip and West Bank
- Syria

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

Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

Israeli ground forces advanced into the Gaza Strip on October 27. IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi said IDF ground forces supported by heavy fire entered the Gaza Strip to dismantle Hamas, secure the border, and return hostages.[6] IDF Southern Command Fire Center Commander Lieutenant Colonel Gilad Keinan stated that Israel is using fire "from the air, from the ground, or from the underground." [7] IDF spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said that Israeli troops entered the northern Gaza Strip with ground troops, armor, and artillery.[8] The IDF released footage of tanks entering along the beach in the northwestern Gaza Strip.[9] Hagari added that the ground operation was supported by "very significant, massive attacks from the sea." [10] The IDF Air Force struck 150 underground targets in the northern Gaza Strip overnight, which included striking Hamas militants, tunnels, and other subterranean infrastructure.[11] Hamas maintains around 480 kilometers of tunnels under the strip.[12]

The al Qassem Brigades claimed to attack advancing IDF forces in Beit Hanoun and east of Bureij overnight. [13] Hamas official Ali Bakara said Palestinian militants used anti-tank missiles to repel the attack and that it has been preparing defensive plans since the beginning of the battle.[14] Israeli Defense Minister

Yoav Gallant said overnight that Israel completed a phase in the war and that Israel will continue to be strong and precise.[15] CTP-ISW cannot independently verify the locations of these Israeli ground operations.

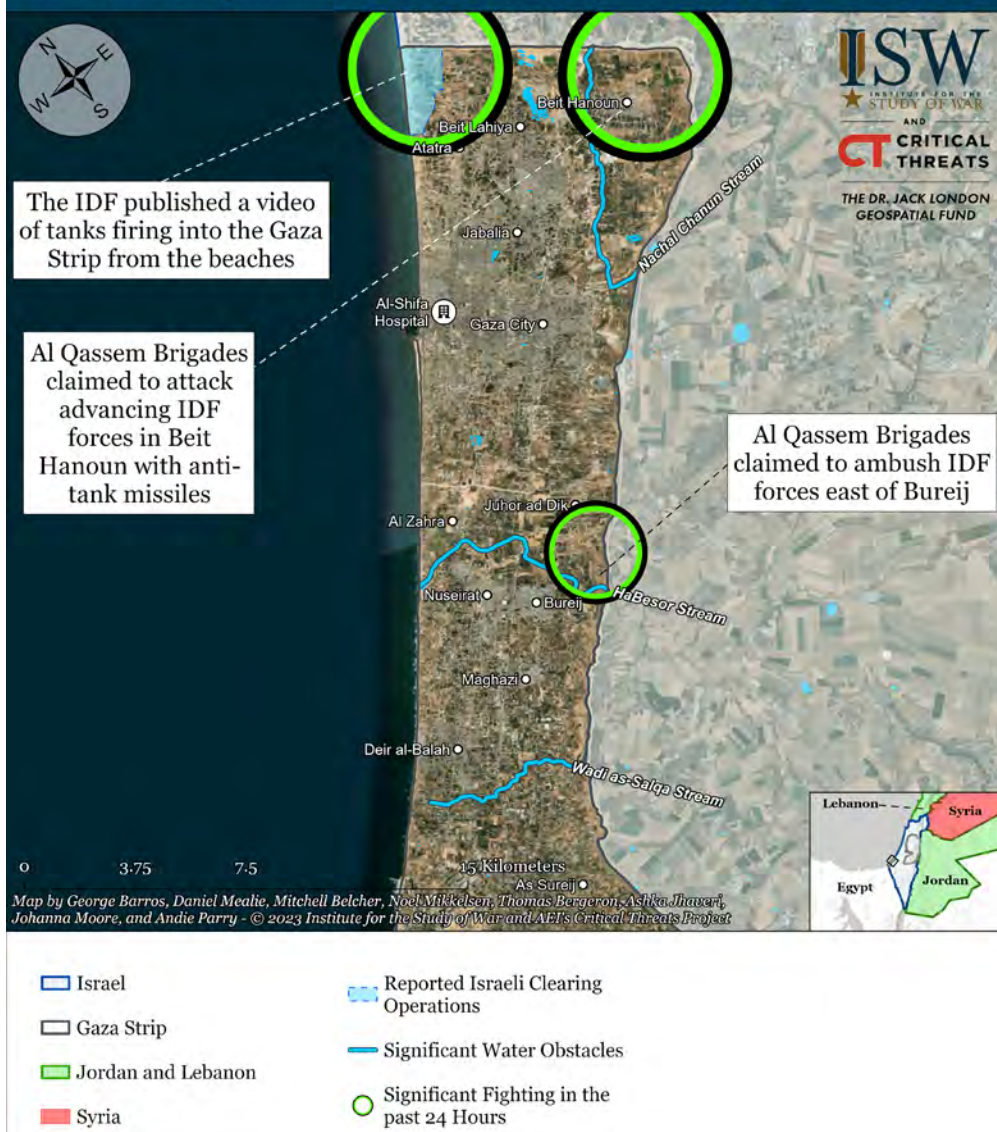
Palestinian militias, including Hamas, are framing the IDF advances into the Gaza Strip as a failure likely to encourage civilians to stay rather than try to evacuate toward the southern part of the strip.

- Hamas claimed that the Israeli ground attack into the Gaza Strip was a failure.[16] A Saraya al Quds official said that the IDF received painful strikes on the points of advance.[17] Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine militant wing spokesman Abu Jamal said the IDF suffered heavy losses.[18] An Israeli spokesperson said Israel had no casualties in Friday night's fighting.[19]
- Israel issued an urgent message for residents of the Gaza Strip and Gaza City to temporarily relocate south until intense hostilities end.[20] Israel dropped flyers in the northern part of the strip with a similar message. Hamas previously urged locals to stay in Gaza, describing the Israeli warnings on October 12 as "psychological warfare" against Palestinians.
- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Hamas continues to use civilians as human shields, which intentionally puts these civilians in harm's way, to protect Hamas' military infrastructure and weapons.[21] Civilians leaving the northern Gaza Strip en masse would risk depriving Hamas of the ability to use regular civilian activity to mask its military activities.

Iranian officials and media continued to argue on October 28 that Israeli ground operations into the Gaza Strip are failing and will not achieve their aim of destroying Hamas. IRGC-affiliated *Fars News Agency* claimed that on October 27 that the IDF ground operations inside the Gaza Strip were unsuccessful.[22] IRGC-affiliated *Tasnim News Agency* similarly argued that Israel has had to repeatedly retreat after conducting limited operations inside the Gaza Strip and that Israel has not been able to do much more than launch a media campaign justifying these retreats.[23] State-controlled *Islamic Republic News Agency* recirculated Hamas' statement that the IDF operations failed as Hamas inflicted significant casualties and damage on the IDF.[24] IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami argued that Israel is incapable of defeating Hamas, claiming that the Gaza Strip will become the grave for many Israeli soldiers.[25]

This Iranian messaging ignores the fact that much of the IDF activity into the Gaza Strip in recent days had been raids.[26] US military doctrine defines a raid as "an operation to temporarily seize an area in order to secure information, confuse an enemy, capture personnel or equipment, or to destroy a capability culminating with a planned withdrawal." [27] The IDF withdrawals after their operations were consistent with the US military doctrinal definition of a raid, which includes a planned retrograde at the end of the mission.

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of October 28, 2023, 3:30 PM ET



West Bank

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

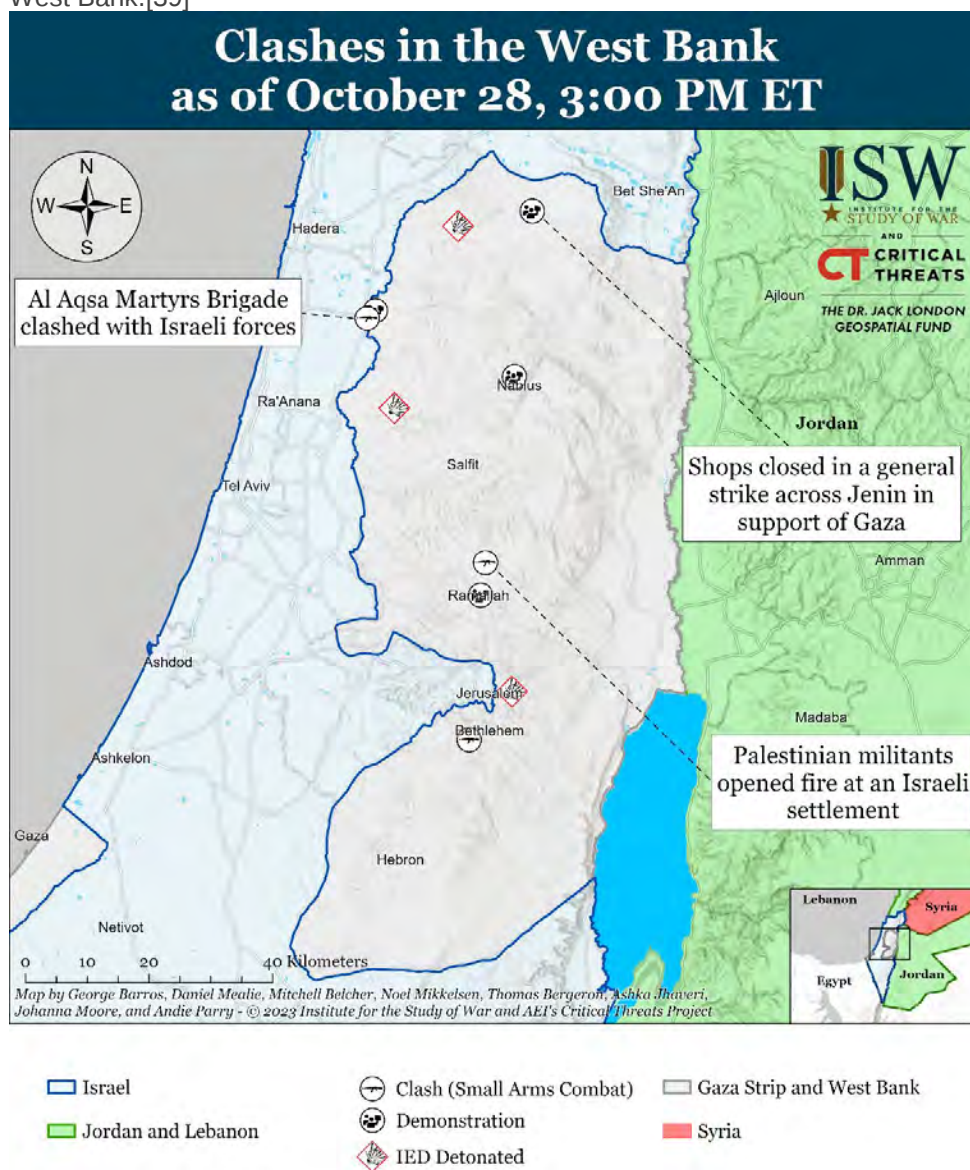
- Draw IDF assets and resources toward the West Bank and fix them there
The Lions' Den—a West Bank-based Palestinian militia—appeared to implicitly call for further mobilization and violence against Israel in the West Bank after the IDF conducted ground operations into the Gaza Strip on October 27. The group posted on its Telegram for the first time since October 25, saying "long live jihad." [28] The Lions' Den has repeatedly called for mobilization in the West Bank in support of Hamas since the war began. The group claims to be unaffiliated with any specific Palestinian faction. [29] The Lions' Den released a statement indicating increasing alignment with Hamas on October 25, however. [30] CTP-ISW previously reported that the group appeared to briefly trigger an uptick in violence after previous calls to mobilize.

Iranian and Palestinian sources are describing Israeli settlers in the West Bank as legitimate military targets. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's official website pushed the narrative that Israeli settlers are armed and contribute to Israel's "ethnic cleansing" of Palestinians on October 27. [31] Hamas Political Bureau member Musa Dudin similarly stated on October 27 that "it is time for the West Bank to attack the security of

the settlements.”[32] The statements come amid heightened tension between Palestinians and settlers in the West Bank.[33] The Palestinian Health Ministry in the West Bank said an Israeli settler shot and killed a Palestinian on October 28.[34] Hamas responded to the shooting on Telegram, hailing the Palestinian as a martyr, who was killed “during the confrontations of the al Aqsa Flood battle.”[35]

Palestinian militants clashed with Israeli forces and held large, anti-Israel demonstrations at their usual rate across the West Bank on October 28.

- CTP-ISW recorded 11 distinct clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces across the West Bank. CTP-ISW recorded four instances of Palestinian militants using IEDs, which has become increasingly common since October 18.[36] The al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade’s Rapid Response Groups claimed to attack IDF soldiers stationed at Netzanei Oz on the border between Israel and the West Bank.[37]
- CTP-ISW recorded five anti-Israel demonstrations in major cities across the West Bank, including Nablus, Jenin, Ramallah, and Tulkarm. Many shops closed in Jenin as part of a general strike against Israeli attacks into the Gaza Strip.[38] Local Telegram channels called for general mobilization in the West Bank on October 28, which is consistent with repeated Hamas calls for further resistance in the West Bank.[39]



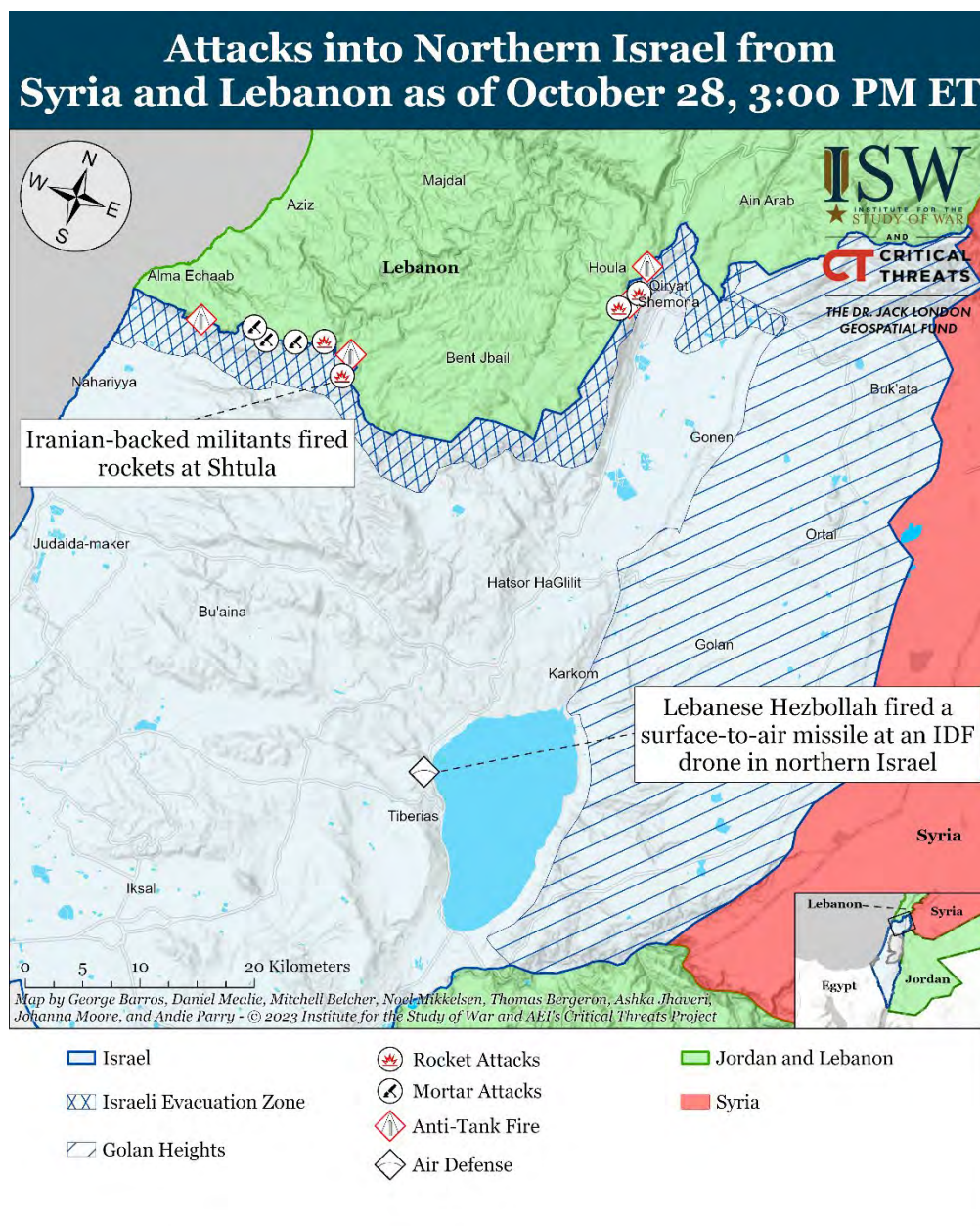
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

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 militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), conducted 12 attacks into Israel as part of an ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets. LH claimed five anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) and rocket attacks on IDF positions along the border with Lebanon on October 28, which is consistent with its rate of attacks prior to October 26.[40] The IDF responded with multiple airstrikes and artillery strikes into southern Lebanon and on the Israel-Lebanon border, including against LH ATGM squads.[41] LH claimed that one of its attacks caused IDF casualties along the border.[42] LH fired an Iranian-designed 358 surface-to-air missile at an Israeli drone on October 28.[43] IDF air defense intercepted the missile over Tiberias in northern Israel.[44] The 358 missile is an Iranian-origin missile widely used by the Houthi movement in Yemen.[45]



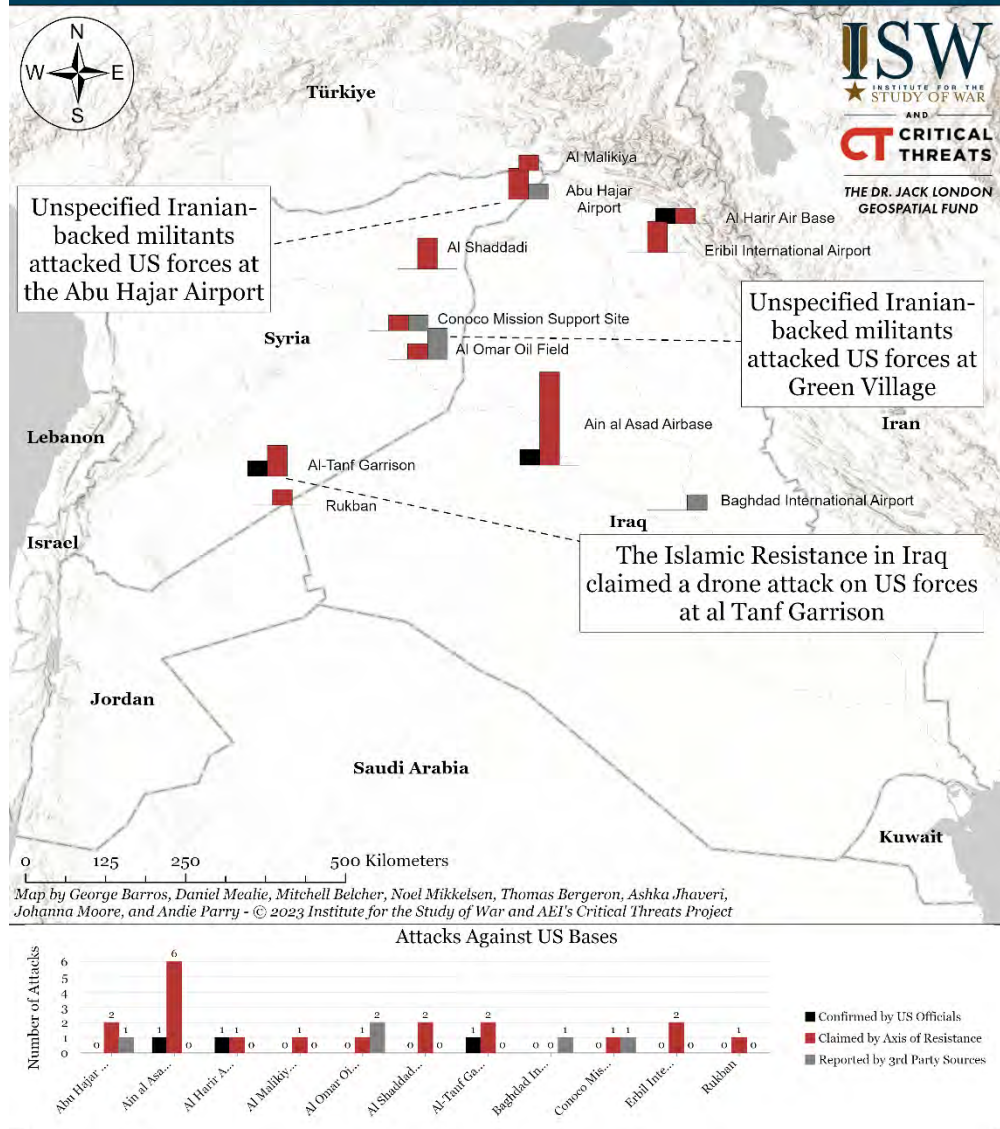
Iran and Axis of Resistance

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 Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed to attack US forces at al Tanf Garrison (ATG) in eastern Syria on October 27.[46] The group claimed to attack the base with two one-way attack drones, marking the group's third attack on ATG since October 19.[47] Local media reported two other unclaimed drone and rocket attacks on US forces stationed at bases in eastern and northeastern Syria.[48] Iranian-backed militias were responsible for these attacks, according to local anti-Syrian regime media.[49] Iranian-backed militias transported short range rockets to a town two miles from a US base in Deir ez Zor Province on October 28.[50] This is the eleventh consecutive day of Iranian-backed militia attacks on US forces in the Middle East. All three attacks occurred after Israel's expanded operation into the Gaza Strip.[51]

Attacks against US Bases in the Middle East between October 18 - 28, 2023



Iran is conducting a messaging campaign (1) to signal to the United States the potential for further Iranian-backed attacks against US forces in the region and (2) to reassure members of its Axis of Resistance, especially LH, of Iran's commitment to supporting them in the event that the United States enters the war in support of Israel.

- Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian warned on October 27 that continued US support to Israel will result in the “opening of new fronts against the United States,” according to Bloomberg TV.[52] Abdollahian spoke with Bloomberg TV, as well as other Western outlets, while visiting New York City for an emergency UNGA session on the Israel-Hamas war.[53] Iranian state media heavily recirculated the headline of “new fronts against the United States” in its coverage of Abdollahian’s interview.[54] This warning diverges slightly from his previous warnings, which have mentioned the possibility for the war to expand geographically but had not framed this expansion as directed specifically against the United States.[55] Abdollahian separately pushed during his interviews with Western outlets the Iranian information operation asserting that the United States and Israel would be responsible for any further escalation and expansion of the war. Abdollahian stated in his interview with NPR on October 27, for example, that the continuation of Israeli attacks on Hamas could drive Iranian-backed Lebanese and Palestinian groups to implement plans “more powerful and deeper than what [the United States] has witnessed.”[56] The narrative that the United States and Israel would be responsible for the escalation of the war ignores the fact that Iran has already facilitated the expansion of this war to Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen by directing its proxy and partner militias in these countries to attack US and Israeli targets.
- IRGC spokesperson Brigadier General Ramazan Sharif warned of further attacks on US positions in the region during an interview with LH-affiliated al Mayadeen on October 28.[57] Sharif warned that “those who cannot reach Israel [in battle] may be able to reach the US forces that are managing this war.”[58] He added that Iran is monitoring US bases in the region and US missile transfers to Israel. Al Mayadeen published the interview in Arabic and English, suggesting that Sharif meant to address local and Western audiences.[59] Sharif’s interview was firstly likely part of Iranian efforts to deter the United States from providing further military support to Israel. Sharif also likely sought to reassure the Axis of Resistance that Iran would support them, especially LH, in light of reports that the United States would intervene if LH attacked Israel.[60]

IRGC-affiliated media is continuing to provide the informational cover for Iran and the Axis of Resistance to conduct attacks against US positions on the false grounds that the United States is directing Israeli operations into the Gaza Strip. *Tasnim* and *Fars* news agencies claimed that 5,000 American soldiers participated in the IDF’s October 27 ground operations into the Gaza Strip.[61] *Tasnim* also repeated its earlier claim from October 16 that American military commanders have taken over command of Israeli operations in the area.[62] Several elements in Iran’s Axis of Resistance, including various Iraqi militias and the Houthi movement, have threatened to attack the United States and Israel if the United States intervenes in support of Israel.

Axis of Resistance Red Lines

Members of Iran's Axis of Resistance have articulated their thresholds for intervening in support of Hamas' war in Israel



Actor	Threat	Stated Red Line
Iran	Conduct missile attacks into Israel from Iran, Lebanon, and Yemen and send fighters from Syria into Israel Direct its proxies to attack US positions in Iraq and Syria	Israel attacks Iran United States refreezes \$6 billion to Iran
Lebanese Hezbollah	Enter the war	Israel conducts a ground operation into Gaza
Badr Organization	Attack US military positions	The United States intervenes in the war
Kataib Hezbollah	Attack US military positions	The United States intervenes in the war
Kataib Seyyed ol Shohada	Intervene in the war	The United States intervenes in the war
Houthi Movement	Conduct drone and missile strikes Target Israeli ships	The United States intervenes in the war Israeli operations in Gaza continue

The Artesh—Iran's conventional military—held its annual exercise near Esfahan on October 27-28.

The Artesh regularly holds this exercise around the same time every year.[63] Senior armed forces officials assessed the Artesh's missile, drone, armored combat, electronic warfare, helicopter transport, and engineering capabilities.[64] The Artesh also unveiled a series of purportedly new capabilities, including “a multi-rotor smart bomber,” a cruise-missile equipped helicopter, and other unspecified “operational and tactical equipment.”[65] Artesh Ground Forces Passive Defense and Engineering Deputy Commander Brigadier General Miser Arjoumandi stated that the Artesh implemented projects for a “five-kilometer fire wall” for coastal defense operations.[66] Khatam ol Anbia Central Headquarters Deputy Coordinator Brigadier General Ali Shadmani assessed that the Artesh Ground Forces are in “excellent” condition in all areas on the sidelines of the exercise on October 28.[67] Artesh Commander Major General Abdol Rahim Mousavi and Artesh Ground Forces Commander Brigadier General Kiomars Heydari similarly stated that the Artesh is fully prepared for defending Iran's borders and responding to any threats.[68]

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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 29, 2023

Iran Update, October 29, 2023

Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, Amin Soltani, and Nicholas Carl

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](#).

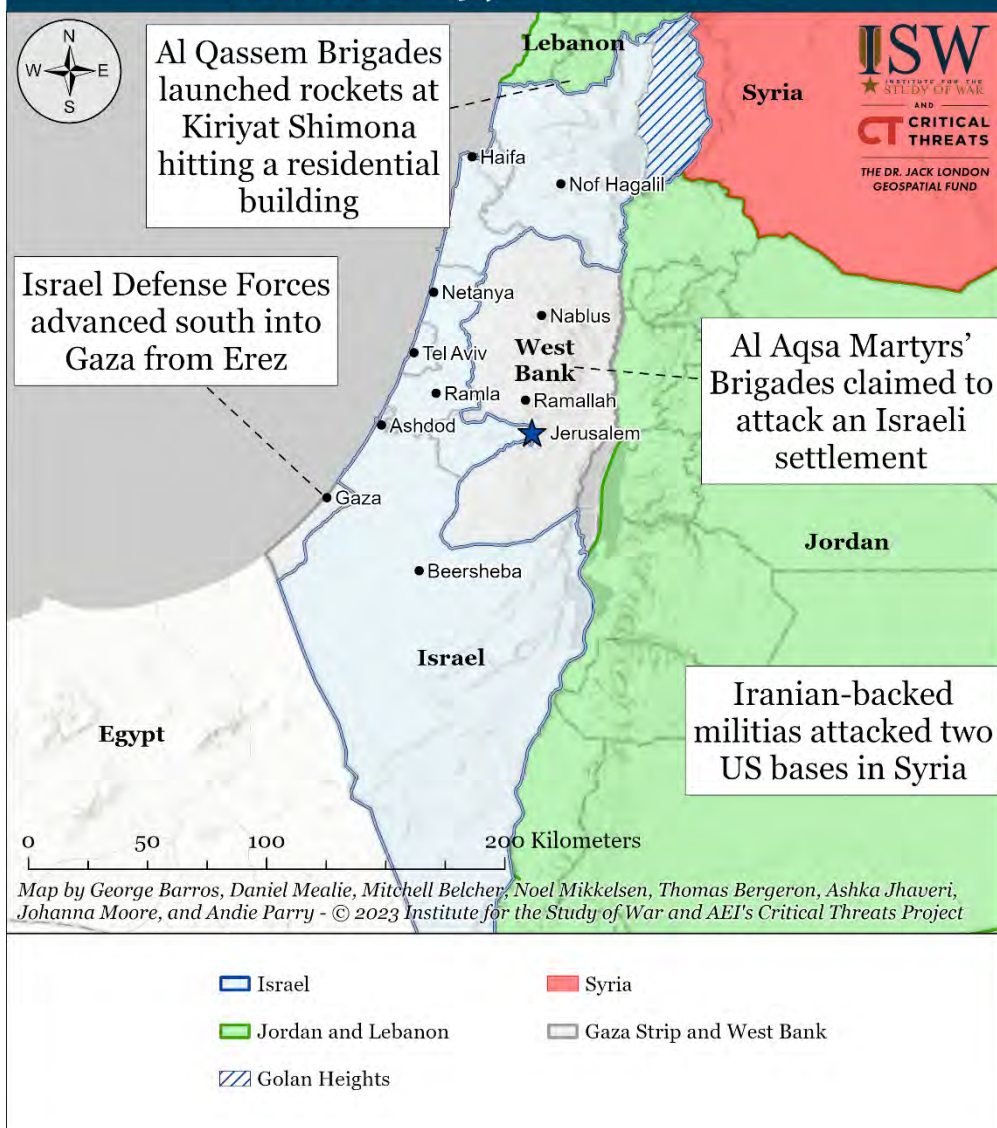
Note: CTP and ISW have refocused the update to cover the Israel-Hamas war. The new sections address developments in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as noteworthy activity from Iran's Axis of Resistance. We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered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

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

Key Takeaways:

1. The al Qassem Brigade—the militant wing of Hamas—likely conducted a complex attack targeting the IDF at the Erez checkpoint.
2. The al Qassem Brigades and Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of PIJ— claimed a joint complex attack on the IDF in al Amiriya.
3. Saraya al Quds claimed a complex attack on the IDF advancing along the Gaza coast.
4. Palestinian militants clashed with Israeli forces and held large, anti-Israel demonstrations at their usual rate across the West Bank.
5. Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted seven attacks into Israel.
6. Iranian-backed militants claimed two attacks targeting US forces in Syria.
7. Asaib Ahl al Haq Secretary General Qais Khazali met with a Hamas delegation in Baghdad.
8. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi gave an interview with Arabic-language outlet al Jazeera, during which he tried to rally the support of the Arab world for Iran and the Axis of Resistance in opposing Israel. This messaging is likely meant to support the Iranian effort to disrupt Israeli normalization with Arab states by concentrating attention on Israel-Palestinian relations.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 29, 2:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

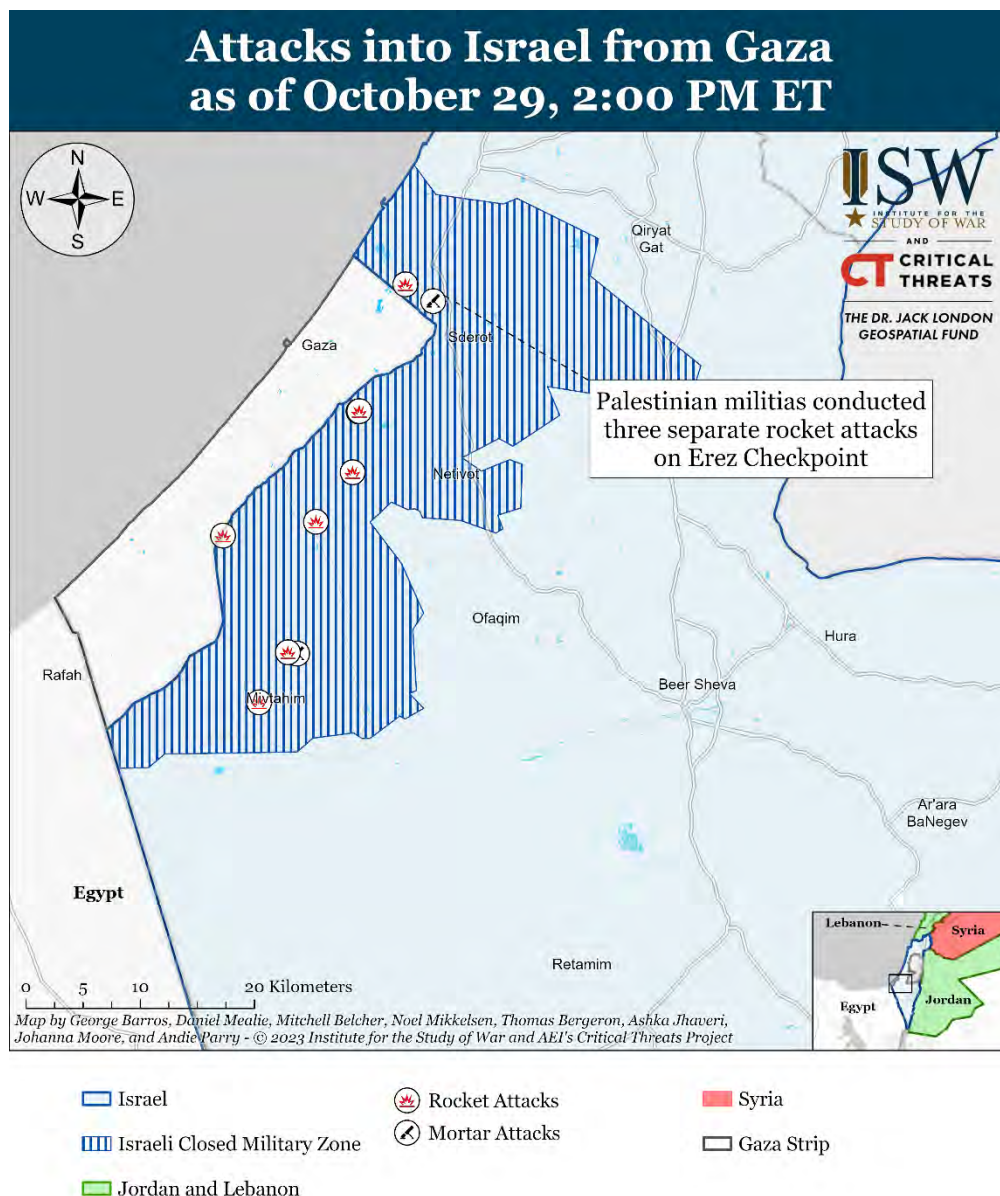
- Erode the will of Israeli political establishment and public to launch and sustain a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip
- Degrade IDF material and morale around the Gaza Strip

The al Qassem Brigade—the militant wing of Hamas—likely conducted a complex attack targeting the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) at the Erez checkpoint on October 29. Militants from the al Qassem Brigades infiltrated Israeli territory via a tunnel west of the checkpoint before clashing with the IDF.[1] LH-affiliated media reported that the militants fired an anti-armor munition at Israeli vehicles at the checkpoint, killing several soldiers. The IDF reported that it “killed several and wounded others,” but did not provide further details.[2] The al Qassem Brigades claimed a rocket and mortar attack in the surrounding area to prevent support from reaching Israeli forces at Erez.[3] Hamas leader Ismail Radwan claimed that al Qassem Brigades militants closed on the checkpoint and engaged in small arms clashes with IDF forces.[4] CTP-ISW has not recorded independent confirmation of the clash or other tactical details.

The al Qassem Brigades and Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed a joint complex attack on the IDF in al Amiriya on October 29.[5] The al Qassem Brigades

claimed to ambush IDF forces advancing south towards Beit Lahia Yasin, using anti-tank rocket launchers, indirect fire, and snipers.[6] The al Qassem Brigades also claimed to attack the advancing forces using an al Zawari one-way attack drone.[7] Saraya al Quds separately claimed that its militants and the al Qassem Brigades conducted a joint indirect fire attack on IDF forces as they advanced towards Beit Lahia.[8] Palestinian media also claimed unidentified militants engaged in small arms fire with the IDF near Umm al Nasr Village, north of Beit Lahia.[9]

CTP-ISW has recorded several interactions between Hamas and PIJ, which suggest they are coordinating attacks into Israel. LH Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah held a coordination and planning meeting with Hamas Deputy Political Bureau Chairman Saleh al Arouri and PIJ Secretary General Ziyad al Nakhalah in Beirut on October 24[10]. Additionally, PIJ- and Hamas-affiliated militias in the West Bank coordinated small arms clashes during the war.[11]



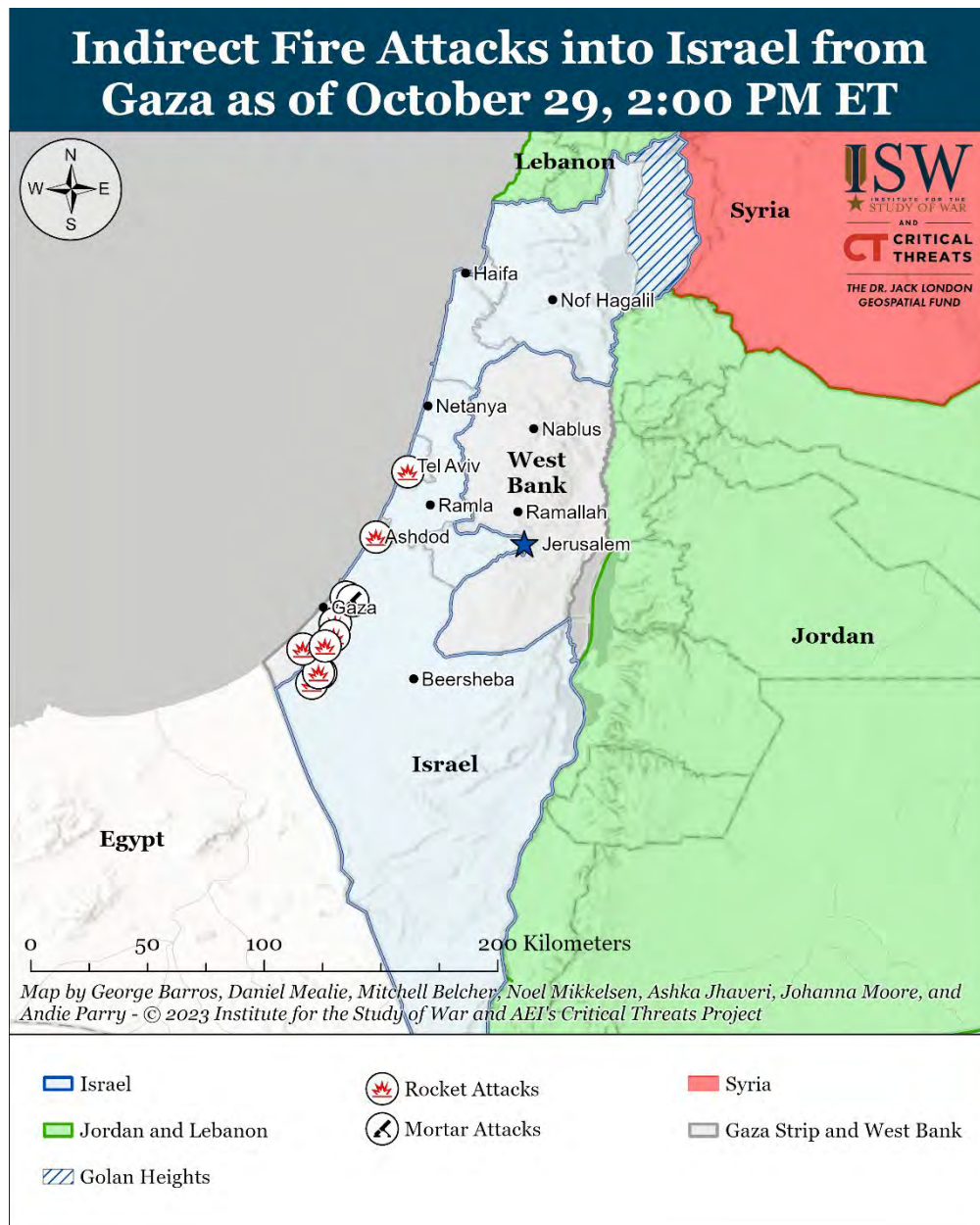
Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Saraya al Quds claimed a complex attack on the IDF advancing along the Gaza coast, injuring two on October 29. Saraya al Quds claimed that militants fired two waves of rocket and mortar attacks on

advancing troops between October 28 and 29 and engaged in small arms clashes on October 29.[12] The IDF Air Force provided air cover and support for IDF soldiers advancing along the Gaza Strip coast from As Saifa. The IDF Air Force targeted and destroyed Hamas military buildings, anti-tank positions, observation posts, and unspecified military infrastructure.[13]

The al Qassem Brigades claimed an anti-tank guided missile attack on an IDF convoy east of Shujaiya, Gaza Strip.[14] The group released a video of the attack reportedly showing a Russian-made Kornet missile munition hit an Israeli armored personnel carrier.

IRGC-affiliated Tasnim News Agency claimed that Palestinian militants ambushed an IDF unit attempting to cross into Gaza Strip east of Rafah.[15] Tasnim reported that the militants forced the IDF to retreat after three hours of fighting, citing its own unspecified sources. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify this report.

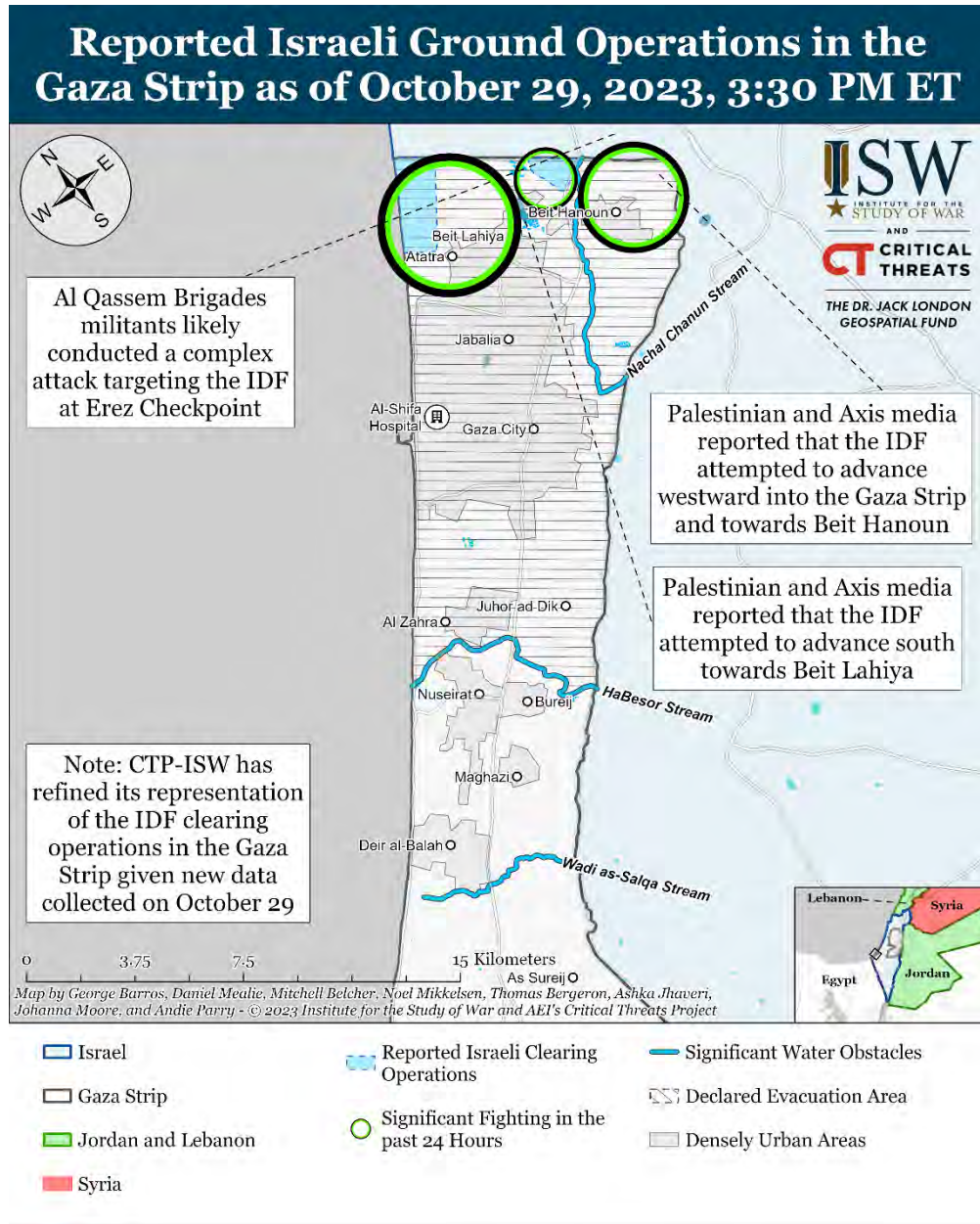


Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

CTP-ISW has refined its representation of the IDF clearing operations in the Gaza Strip. This change reflects new data collected on October 29 rather than new developments.

Palestinian and Axis of Resistance media reported that the IDF attempted to advance westward into the Gaza Strip and toward Beit Hanoun.[16] The sources claimed that Palestinian militants destroyed two Merkava tanks and repelled the IDF advance. The IDF has not reported on any advance to the east of Beit Hanoun. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify these claims.



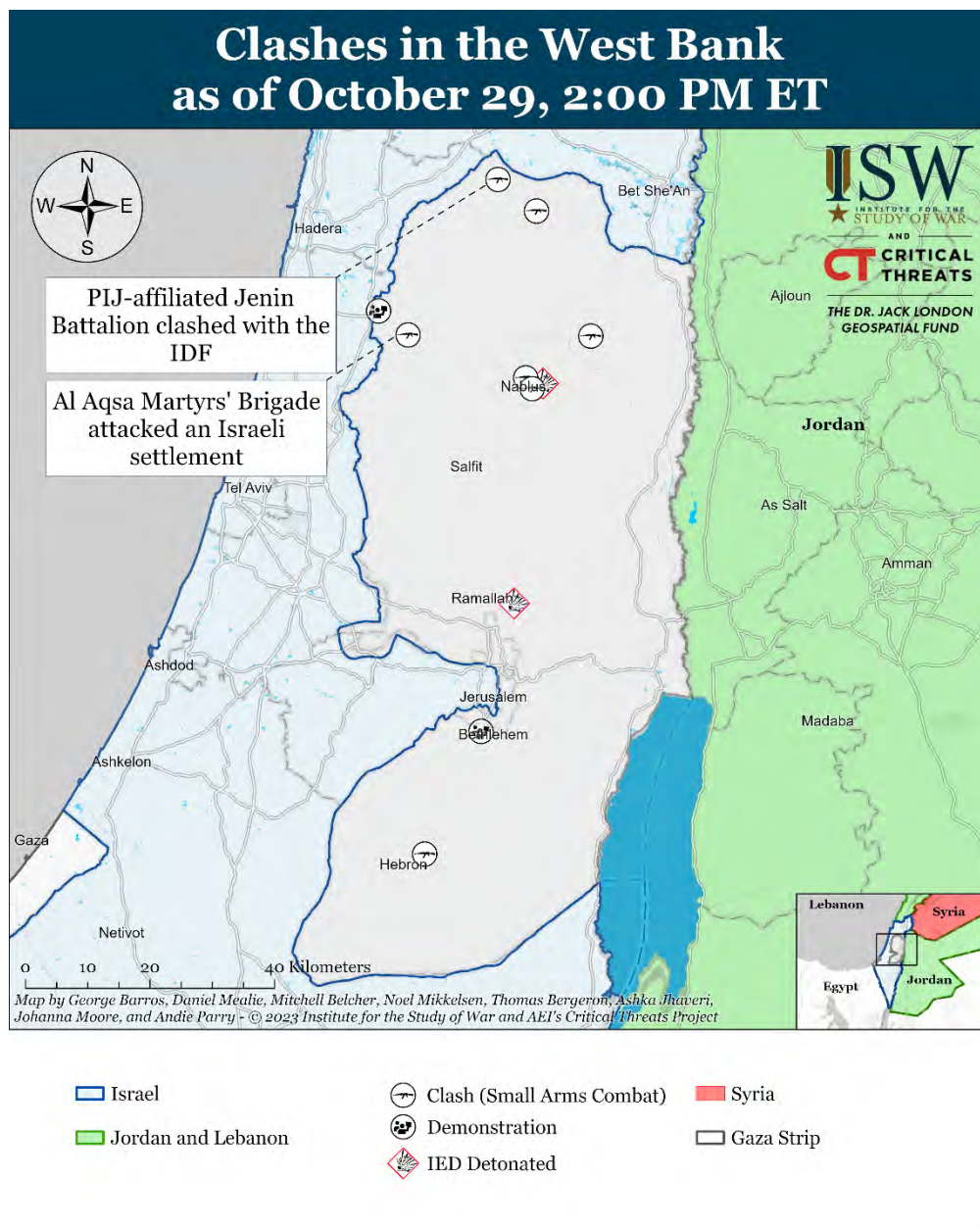
West Bank

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

Palestinian militants clashed with Israeli forces and held large, anti-Israel demonstrations at their usual rate across the West Bank on October 29. CTP-ISW recorded nine distinct clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces. CTP-ISW recorded three instances of Palestinian militants using IEDs, which has become increasingly common since October 18. CTP-ISW recorded three anti-Israel demonstrations in major cities across the West Bank, including Tulkarm, Bethlehem, Jenin, and Nablus. The Palestinian Ministry of Health claimed that Israeli security forces shot and killed three Palestinians on

October 29.[17] It is noteworthy that there has been no significant inflection in anti-Israel activity in the West Bank since the IDF began ground operations in the Gaza Strip on October 27. Growing violence between Palestinian militants and Israeli settlers could drive greater anti-Israel activity in the West Bank. The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade claimed to attack the Israeli settlement of Aveni Hevetz, targeting settlers and homes.[18] The attack follows Iranian and Hamas rhetoric describing Israeli settlers in the West Bank as legitimate military targets.[19] Hamas and the Axis of Resistance could exploit social tensions between local Palestinians and Israeli settlers to support the campaign to foment unrest and thereby draw IDF assets and resources toward the West Bank.



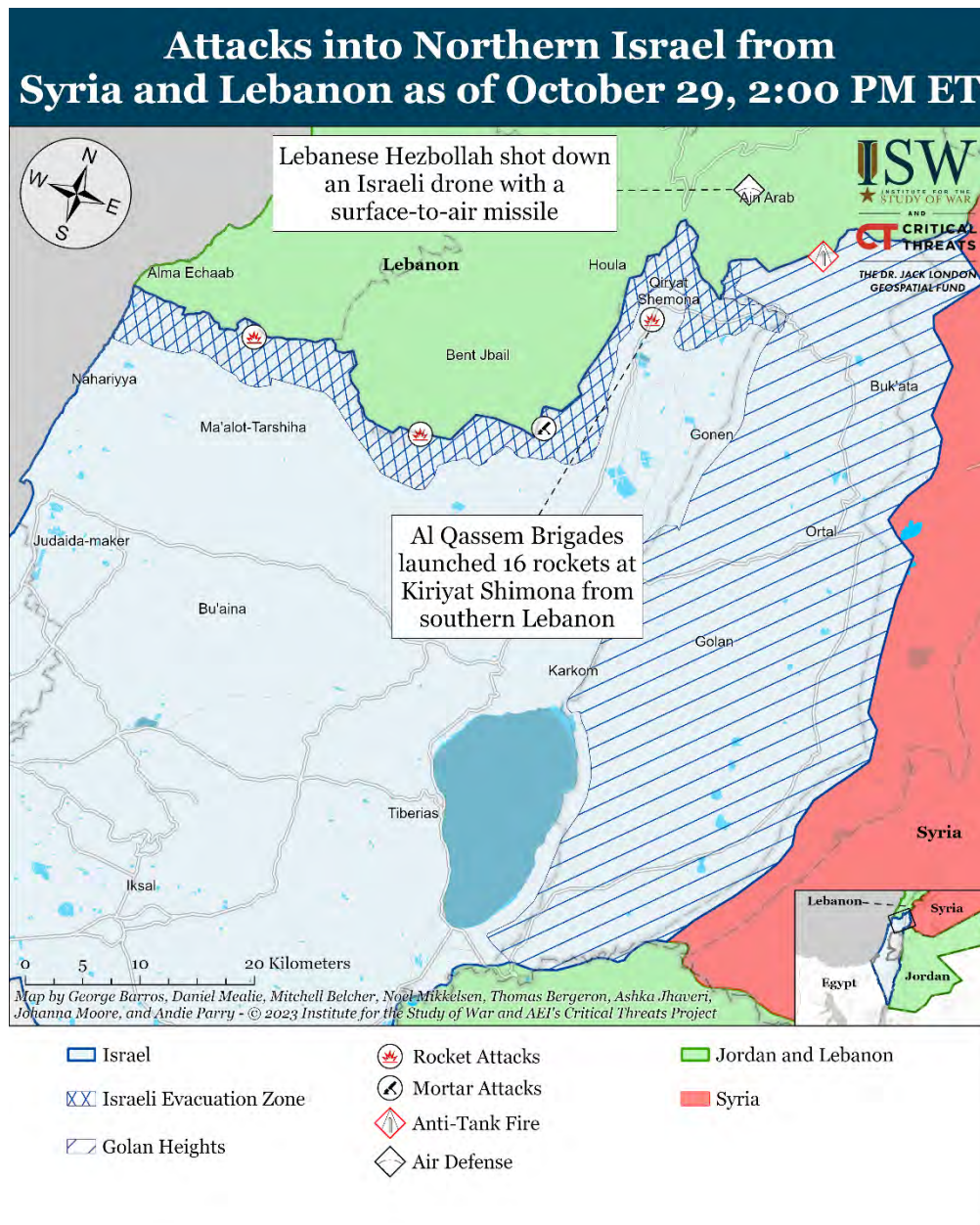
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

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 militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), conducted seven attacks into Israel. LH claimed two indirect fire attacks on IDF positions in northeastern Israel on October 28.[20] LH also claimed to shoot down an Israeli drone with a surface-to-surface missile.[21] The al Qassem Brigades claimed to fire two waves of rockets at Kiriyat Shimona, hitting a residential building.[22] The al Qassem Brigades last claimed to fire rockets from southern Lebanon on October 19.[23] LH almost certainly permits such attacks from southern Lebanon given the extent to which LH controls the area and coordinates with the other Iranian-backed groups operating there.



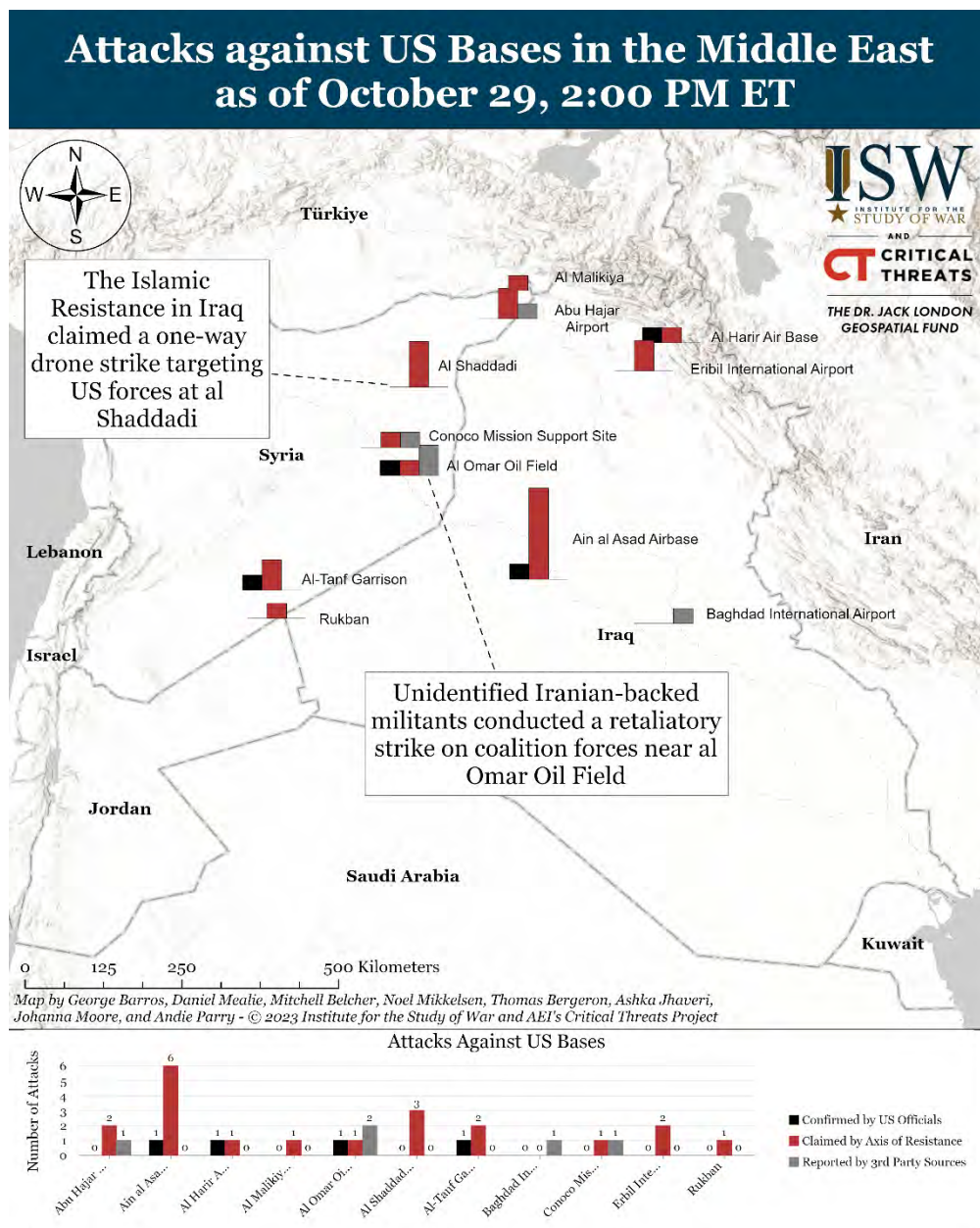
Iran and Axis of Resistance

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

Iranian-backed militants claimed two attacks targeting US forces in Syria on October 29. This is the 28th attack targeting US forces in the Middle East since October 18.

- The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—an umbrella group for Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed a one-way drone attack targeting US forces stationed at al Shaddadi, Hasaka Province, Syria on October 29.[24] The group stated that it launched two drones at the base and claimed that both hit their intended target. CENTCOM has not confirmed or denied the attack occurred. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify the claim.
- Unidentified Iranian-backed militias conducted a rocket strike targeting US forces stationed near al Omar Oil Field, Hasaka Province, Syria according to local news outlet Deir ez Zor 24.[25] The attack was reportedly in retaliation for US strikes on IRGC military facilities in eastern Syria on October 26.[26]



Asaib Ahi al Haq (AAH) Secretary General Qais Khazali met with a Hamas delegation in Baghdad on October 29.[27] The Hamas delegation included Hamas' senior representative to Lebanon Osama Hamdan and a member of Hamas' Office of Arab and Islamic Relations Mohammad al Hafi. Khazali and the Hamas delegation discussed the Israel-Hamas war and reaffirmed the delegation of Iraqi militia support for the Palestinian militias fighting Israel. Khazali has previously threatened to conduct attacks on US forces in the Middle East should the United States intervene in the Israel-Hamas war.[28] AAH is a member of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, which has claimed 24 of the 28 attacks on US forces since October 18.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi gave an interview with Arabic-language outlet al Jazeera on October 28, during which he tried to rally the support of the Arab world for Iran and the Axis of Resistance in opposing Israel.[29] This messaging is likely meant to support the Iranian effort to disrupt Israeli normalization with Arab states by concentrating attention on Israel-Palestinian relations. Raisi described Israeli crimes and falsely claimed that the IDF retreated from its ground operation into the Gaza Strip, describing the alleged retreat as a great military failure. Raisi also stated that the Axis of Resistance is "fed up" with Israeli "oppression." This Iranian messaging marks a departure from the previous Iranian rhetoric that focused primarily on lauding the success of Hamas in attacking Israel on October 7.[30] Iranian and Palestinian militant officials have previously asserted that the purpose of the October 7 attack was to disrupt Israeli efforts to normalize its relations with the Arab world.[31] Raisi separately justified further Iranian-backed attacks against US and Israeli targets during the interview. Raisi accused Israel of crossing all "red lines," which could "force everyone to take action." Raisi also emphasized the role of the United States in supporting Israel militarily. Members of Iran's Axis of Resistance have repeatedly messaged that they would attack the United States and Israel if they cross their stated red lines, which included Israel conducting ground operations into the Gaza Strip and the United States providing meaningful military support to Israel.

Anti-Iranian regime protests occurred in Iran on October 28 and 29 in response to the death of a young Iranian Kurdish girl. The Iranian morality police reportedly assaulted 16-year-old Armita Geravand on the Tehran subway for not properly adhering to the mandatory hijab law on October 1.[32] Geravand went into a coma after the incident and died on October 28. A medium-sized crowd gathered at her gravesite, chanting anti-regime slogans on October 29.[33] Her death parallels the circumstances that lead to the death of Mahsa Amini in September 2022. Amini's death sparked one of the most significant anti-regime protest waves in the history of the Islamic Republic.

Geravand's death underscores how little the regime changed its approach to policing women following the Mahsa Amini protest movement. Iranian leaders continue to refuse to grant serious concessions, such as easing the hijab requirement, to protesters and have even pursued harsher enforcement measures in recent months.[34]

[1] <https://almanar dot com.lb/11150955?s=tg>

[2] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1718649737178382375>

[3] Source available upon request

; <https://t.me/khnmedia/149460> ; https://t.me/Palestine_news_Update/1395... com.lb/11150955?s=tg ;

[4] <https://almanar dot com.lb/11150955?s=tg>

[5] Sources available upon request

; <https://www dot tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/08/07/2979837/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B4%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B5%D9%87%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA%DB%8C-%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%AE%D9%85%D9%BE%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87-%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%86-105-%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%81-%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C%D9%85> ;

[6] <https://www dot tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/08/07/2979837/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B4%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B5%D9%87%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA%DB%8C-%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%AE%D9%85%D9%BE%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87-%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%86-105-%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%81-%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C%D9%85> ;

; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/94> ; https://twitter.com/no_itsmyturn/sta...

[7] Source available upon request

[8] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16506> ; <https://t.me/khnmedia/149467> ; <https://...>

- [9] <https://t.me/tagamoo3/6429>
- [10] <https://www.dofarsnews.ir/en/news/14020803000608/Lebanese-Palestinian-R...> ; <https://www.dottasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/08/03/2977725/%D8%AF%DB%8C%D...> ; <https://www.dotpresstv.ir/Detail/2023/10/25/713381/Lebanese-Palestinian...> ; <https://www.dotimesofisrael.com/nasrallah-senior-hamas-and-pij-leade...>
- [11] <https://www.dotalmayadeen.net/news/politics/%D9%83%D8%AA%D9%8A%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D8%B7%D9%88%D9%84%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%85--%D9%85%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A9-%D9%87%D9%8A-%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B7%D9%88>
- [12] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16498> ; HYPERLINK
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- [13] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1718602908004933842>
- [14] <https://twitter.com/Sprinter99800/status/1718371038130581987>
- [15] <https://www.dottasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/08/07/2979706/%D8%B5%D9%87%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%AD-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%DA%A9%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%86%D8%AF>
- [16] <https://t.me/tagamoo3/6452> ; <https://t.me/khnmedia/149463> ; <https://...>
- [17] https://t.me/Palestine_news_Update/1367
- [18] https://t.me/Palestine_news_Update/1385
- [19] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-28-2023>
- [20] <https://almanar.dotcom.lb/11150746>;
- [21] <https://twitter.com/AlMayadeenLive/status/1718675563202654621>
- [22] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/103>; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1718670061475434968>
- [23] <https://twitter.com/AuroraIntel/status/1715015989656502391>
- [24] <https://t.me/elamharbi/54>
- [25] <https://deirezzor24.net/en/the-global-coalition-and-iranian-militias-exchange-rocket-fire-in-deir-ezzor/>
- [26] <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3570798/secretary-...>
- [27] https://twitter.com/Tammuz_Intel/status/1718614168910074250 ; <https://...com/ar/%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%B2%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%AB-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%BA%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%B9-%D9%88%D9%81%D8%AF-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D8%AE%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%88%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%BA%D8%B2-%D8%A9>
- [28] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-11-2023>
- [29] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/ar/news/2023/10/28/2979622> ; <https://president.dotir/fa/147742> ; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/08/07/2979761>
- [30] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/19/2969870> ; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/19/2970045> ; <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-dialog?id=54060> ; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/18/2969763> ; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/19/2970267> ; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/19/2970045/>
- [31] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-11-2023> ; <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-20-2023>
- [32] <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/28/world/armita-geravand-iranian-teen-dies-i...>
- [33] <https://x.com/RahamimoffTamar/status/1718596321995612386?s=20> ; <https://...>
- [34] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-june-29-2023> ; <https://...>

IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 30, 2023

Iran Update, October 30, 2023

Brian Carter, Andie Parry, Peter Mills, Johanna Moore, Annika Ganzeveld, Amin Soltani, and Nicholas Carl

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.

Key Takeaways:

1. Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted indirect fire attacks into Israel at a rate consistent with the rate observed on October 29.
2. Israeli forces conducted a route clearance operation moving from near Juhor ad Dik to the Salah al Din road in the Gaza Strip before withdrawing.
3. Israeli forces conducted an extensive operation targeting Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad leaders and infrastructure in Jenin. CTP-ISW has recorded noteworthy Palestinian militant activity around Jenin in recent months.
4. CTP-ISW recorded three additional clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces.
5. Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted 10 attacks into Israel.
6. LH leader Hassan Nasrallah is scheduled to give a speech on Friday, November 3, according to LH media. This planned speech is noteworthy given that Nasrallah has not yet made a public statement on the Israel-Hamas war.
7. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed responsibility for two separate rocket attacks targeting US forces stationed in Iraq and Syria.
8. Supreme Leader Military Affairs Adviser and former IRGC Commander Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi met with Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin on the sidelines of the 10th Common Security and Lasting Peace forum in Beijing.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 30, 2:00 PM ET



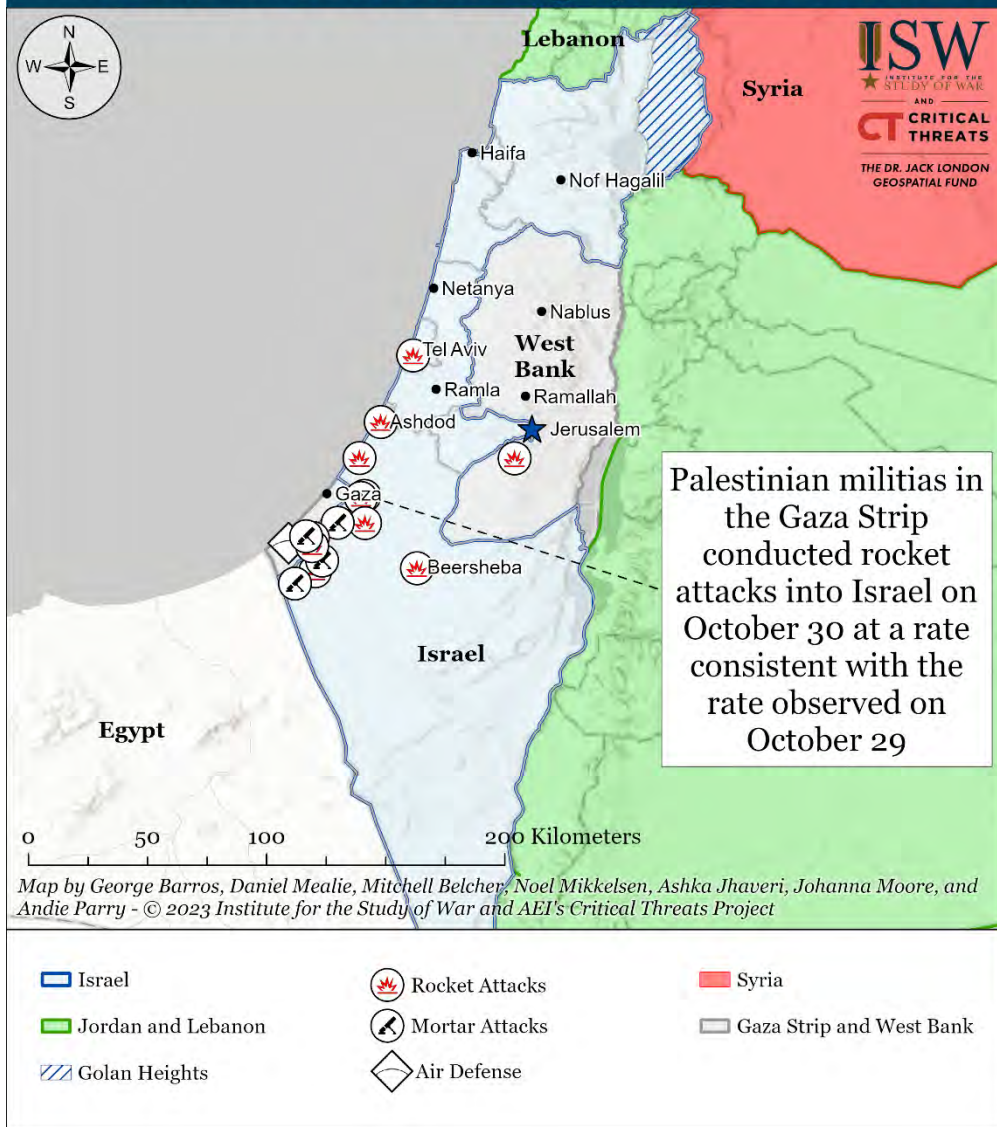
Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Erode the will of 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

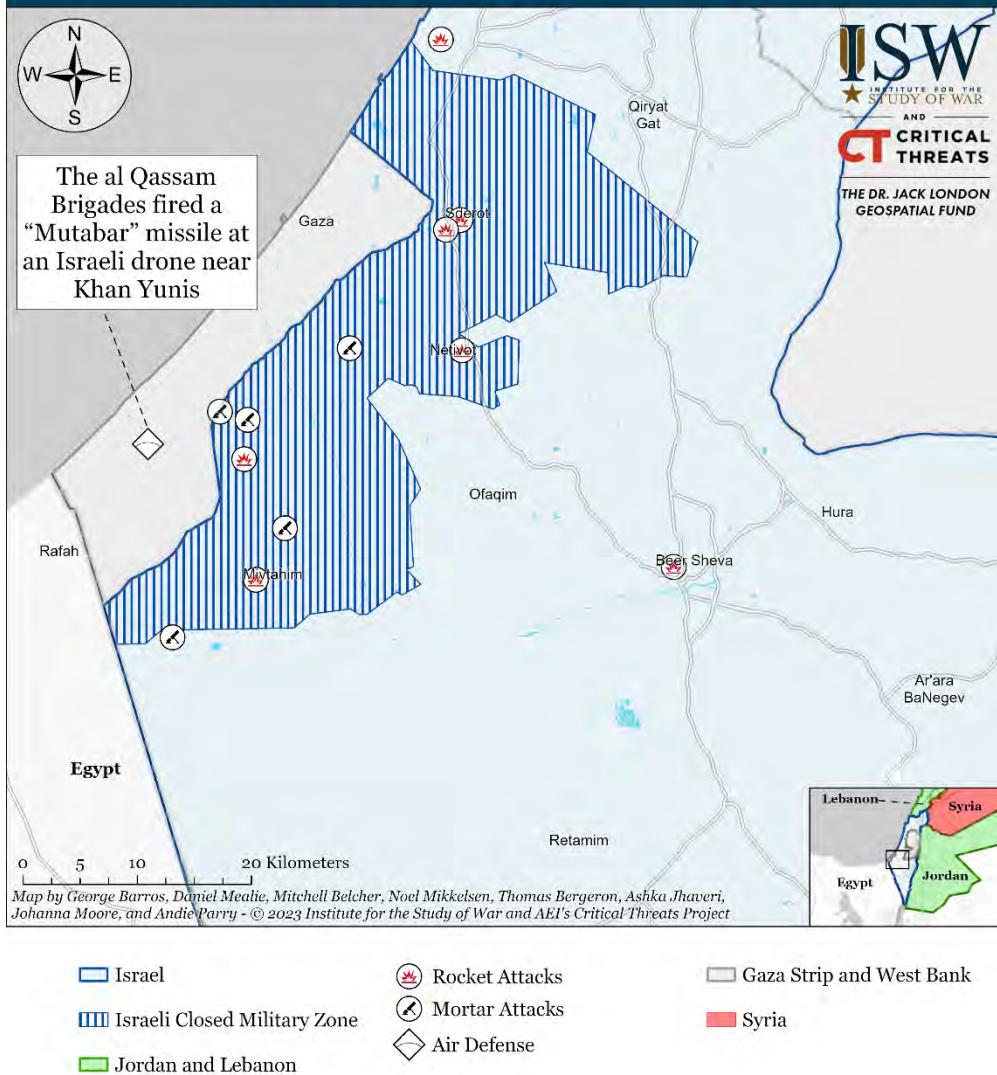
Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted indirect fire attacks into Israel on October 30 at a rate consistent with the rate observed on October 29. The al Qassem Brigades—Hamas' militant wing—claimed responsibility for eight indirect fire attacks.[1] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for another eight indirect fire attacks.[2]

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 30, 2:00 PM ET



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

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 30, 2:00 PM ET



Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.
Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

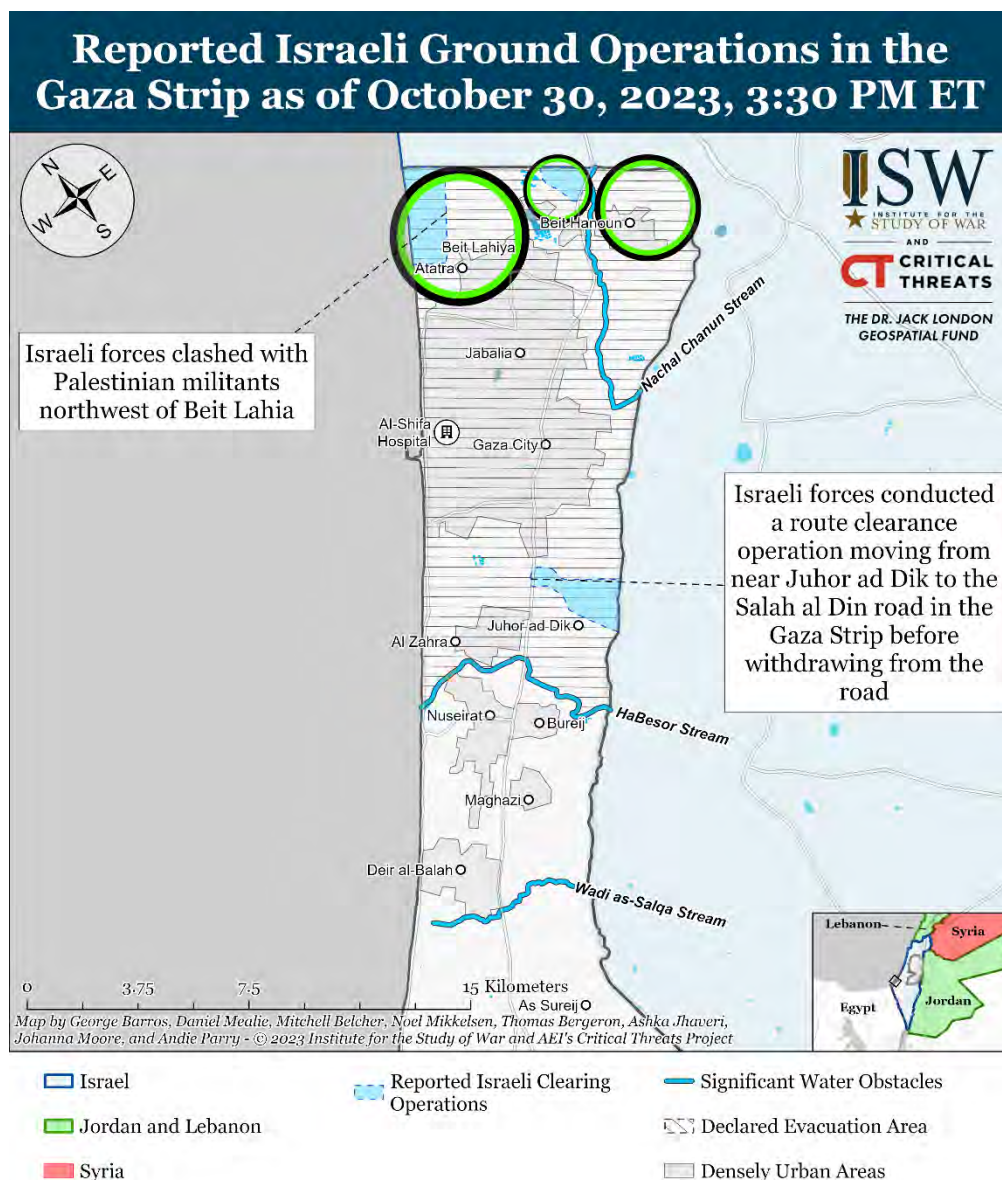
Israeli forces conducted a route clearance operation moving from near Juhor ad Dik to the Salah al Din road in the Gaza Strip before withdrawing.[3] Israeli forces, including at least one bulldozer and other armor, held a position on the Salah al Din road on October 30.[4] Israeli forces withdrew after a brief period.[5] Palestinian sources and the IDF reported that Palestinian fighters engaged IDF armor east of Zaytoun neighborhood, which is just west of Salah al Din road.[6] The Salah al Din road is an important north-south thoroughfare running through the entirety of the strip. This Israeli operation is consistent with Israeli military experts' characterization of IDF tactics, which involve small IDF units taking "limited areas" before following up with additional ground forces and armor.[7]

Palestinian media, Hamas, and Axis of Resistance media claimed that the al Qassem Brigades and National Resistance Brigades engaged IDF forces in the northwestern Gaza Strip on October 30. The National Resistance Brigades is the militant wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Hamas claimed that the al Qassem Brigades used mortars, snipers, anti-tank fire, and machine guns to target IDF units moving northwest of Beit Lahia.[8] The National Resistance Brigades mortared Israeli

vehicles attempting to enter the strip in the northwest, according to the reports' claims.[9] The al Qassem Brigades also used anti-tank fire and machine guns against IDF forces in the northwestern Gaza Strip on October 30.[10]

Hamas is continuing its information operation claiming that the Palestinian militants are defeating the IDF and thwarting the IDF's plan.[11] The IDF is intentionally moving slowly to take "limited areas" with small forces before following them up with additional ground forces.[12]

Israeli special operations forces and Shin Bet personnel rescued IDF Private Uri Magidish on October 29 during a ground operation in the Gaza Strip.[13] The Israeli defense minister said that Israel planned the operation for "days" and that the operation was held in a "relatively remote area in the northern Gaza Strip." [14]



West Bank

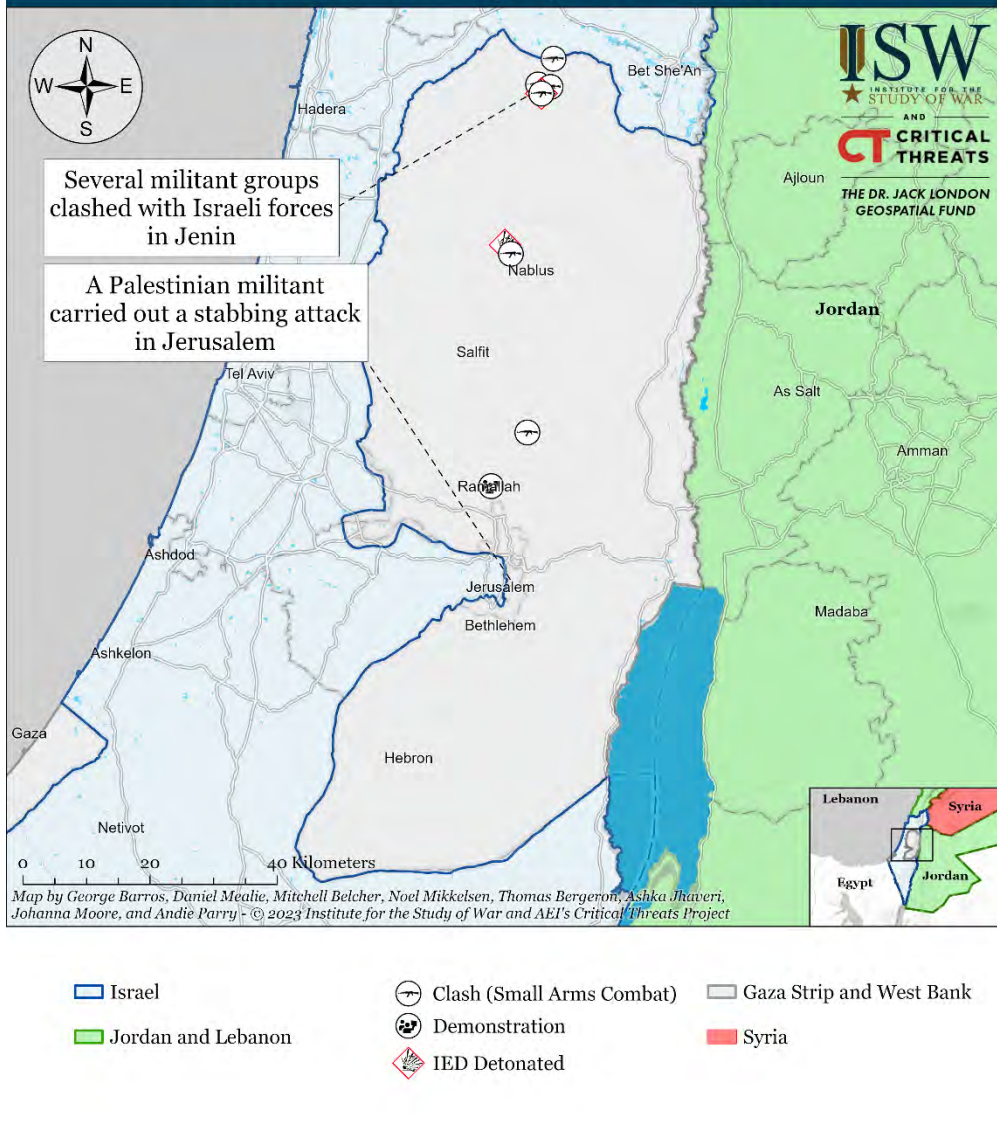
Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

Israeli forces conducted an extensive operation targeting Hamas and PIJ leaders and infrastructure in Jenin on October 30.[15] The raid is part of the Israeli effort to degrade Hamas and PIJ capabilities in the West Bank. Israeli media reported the operation killed senior PIJ commander and founder of the Jenin Battalion Wiam Iyad Hanon.[16] The Jenin Battalion is an amalgamation of militia groups based in Jenin but most heavily associated with PIJ.[17] CTP-ISW recorded two claims of Palestinian militants using IEDs in Jenin on October 30.[18] PIJ claimed that the IEDs damaged Israeli armored vehicles.[19] CTP-ISW cannot independently verify the claims of damage or casualties caused by the IED attacks. CTP-ISW has recorded noteworthy Palestinian militant activity around Jenin in recent months. PIJ stated on October 13 that the group is prioritizing attacking Israeli forces and infrastructure around Jenin.[20] PIJ's branch in Jenin separately announced in July 2023 that they have explosively formed penetrators (EFP), which are an Iranian-designed explosive device that Iranian-backed militias—with Iranian direction—used extensively against US forces in Iraq.[21]

CTP-ISW recorded three additional clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces on October 30.[22] The IDF stated it arrested 38 Hamas members and 13 other militants while confiscating weapons across the West Bank.[23] CTP-ISW recorded a single anti-Israel demonstration in Ramallah compared to three the day prior.[24] It is noteworthy that there has been no significant inflection in anti-Israel activity in the West Bank since the IDF began ground operations into the Gaza Strip on October 27. **Shin Bet warned the Israeli government that continued settler attacks could lead to an eruption of violence in the West Bank, according to Israeli media.**[25] Shin Bet head Ronen Bar warned on October 30 that an increase in Israeli settlers attacking Palestinians risks harming the war effort. US administration officials have also expressed concern over rising settler violence.[26]

Clashes in the West Bank as of October 30, 2:00 PM ET



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

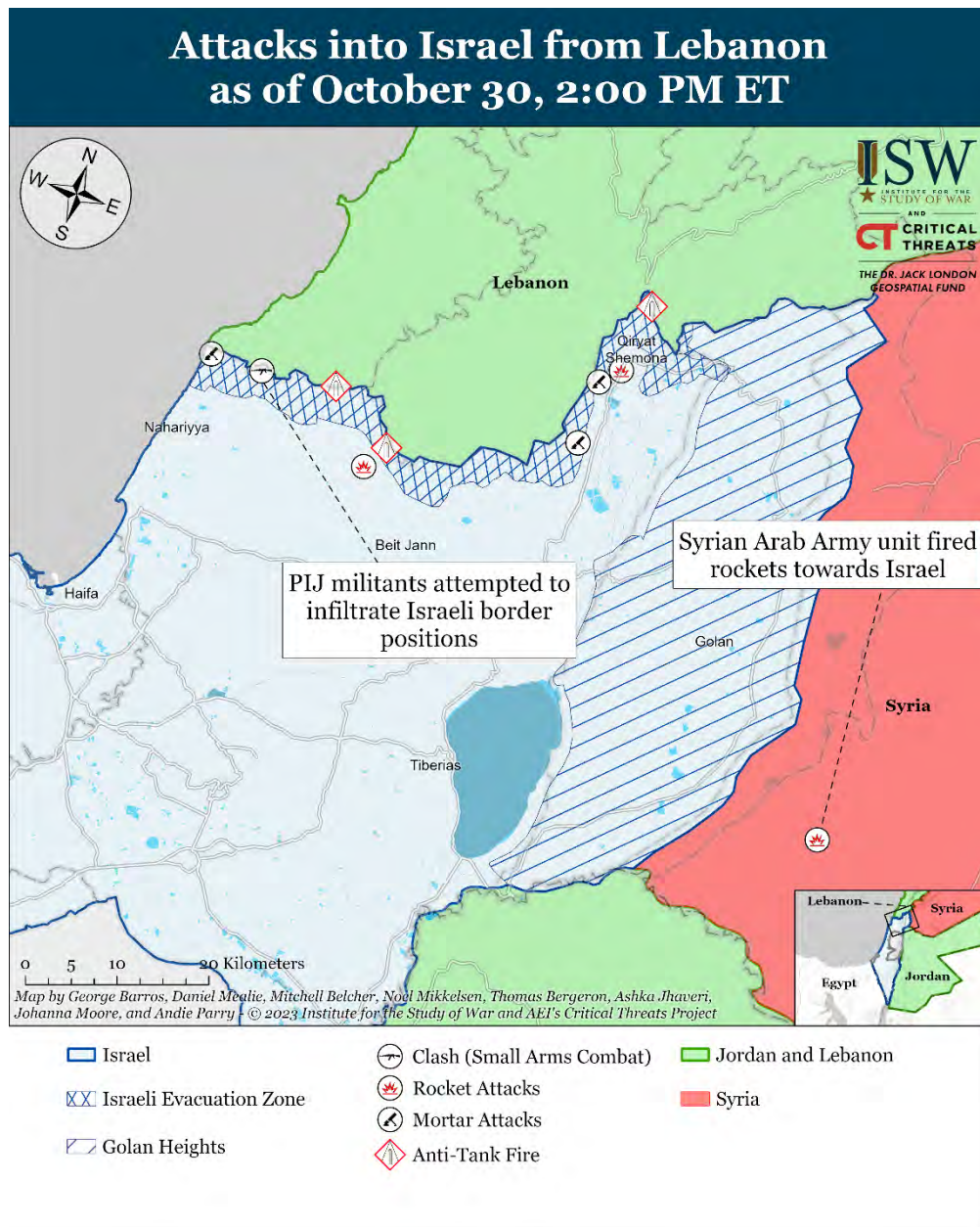
Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), conducted 10 attacks into Israel. Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed an infiltration into Hanita, northern Israel, and later acknowledged that two PIJ militants died during the operation.[27] LH claimed three anti-tank guided missile attacks on IDF positions in northeastern Israel on October 30.[28] Unidentified militants conducted seven mortar and rocket attacks into northern Israel.[29] The IDF continues to conduct airstrikes and artillery attacks targeting militants who are attempting to launch indirect fire into northern Israel.[30] The PIJ attack is especially noteworthy given the closeness of the group to Iran and LH. Tehran and LH have provided various forms of support, including funding and military equipment and training, to PIJ for decades.[31] LH almost certainly permits Palestinian militant groups, such as PIJ, to conduct attacks from southern Lebanon given the extent to which LH controls the area and coordinates with the other Iranian-backed groups operating there.

A Syrian Arab Army (SAA) unit fired two rockets into the Golan Heights on October 29, according to local Syrian media.[32] The report claimed that the rockets landed in an open field. The IDF conducted airstrikes against the SAA 112th Brigade near Nawa, southern Syria, shortly after the rocket fire.[33] **LH leader Hassan Nasrallah is scheduled to give a speech on Friday, November 3, according to LH media.[34]** This planned speech is noteworthy given that Nasrallah has not yet made a public statement on the Israel-Hamas war. Nasrallah's only major appearance since the war began was him attending a coordination and planning meeting with senior Hamas and PIJ leaders in Beirut on October 25.[35]



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 Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed responsibility for two separate rocket attacks targeting US forces stationed in Iraq and Syria on October 30.[36] The

Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed responsibility for 26 attacks on US forces in the Middle East since October 18.

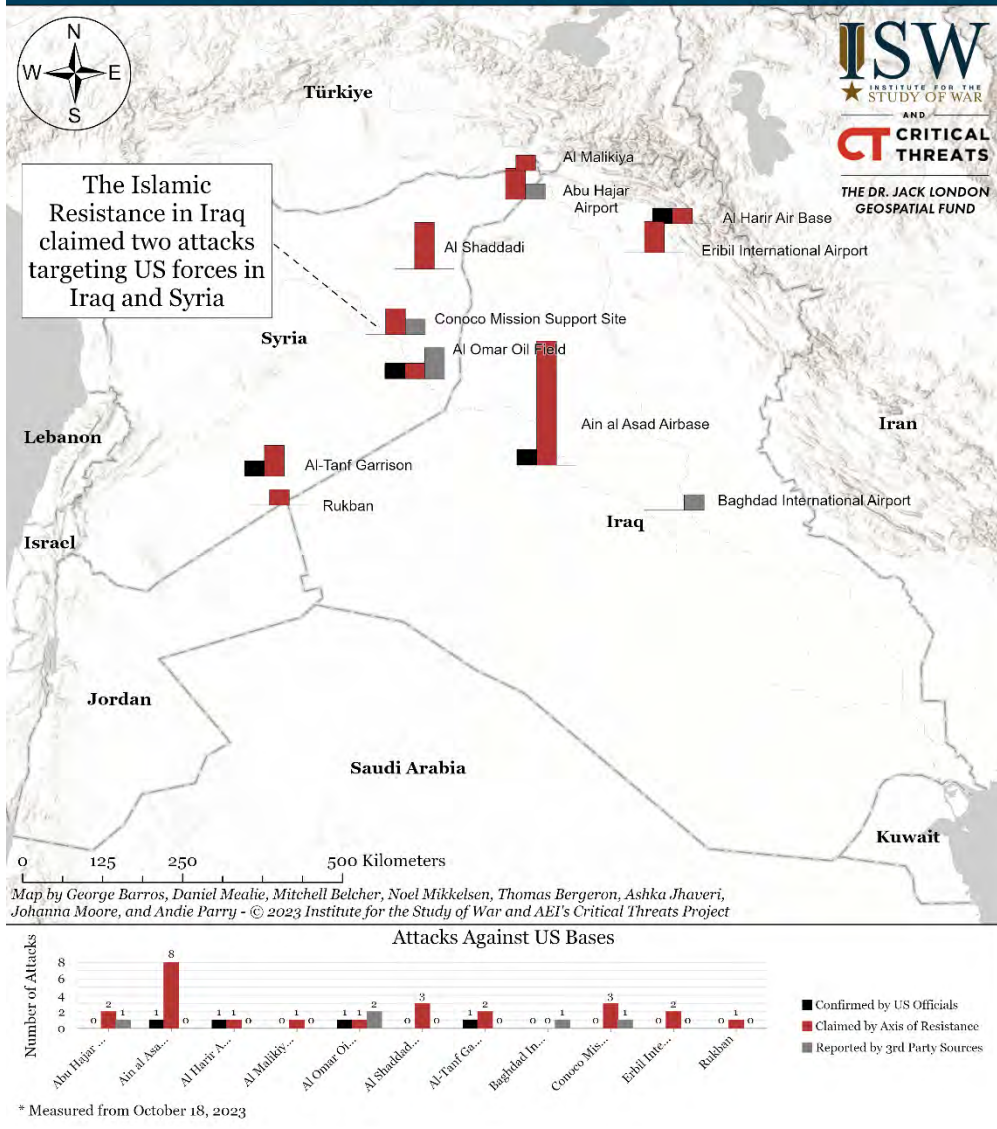
- The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed a rocket attack targeting Conoco Mission Support Site on October 30.[37] This is the third attack on this location that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed since October 18. Syria-based al Sharqiya News reported that the group launched the attack from a neighborhood within Deir ez Zor City controlled by Iranian-backed militias.[38]
- The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed a rocket attack on Ain al Asad airbase on October 30.[39] This is the eighth attack on Ain al Asad airbase that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed since October 18.

UK-based outlet Amwaj Media reported on October 30 that IRGC Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani is coordinating Axis of Resistance activities against Israel from a joint operations center in Beirut.[40] Ghaani traveled to Beirut on October 20 where he has since been stationed and met and coordinated with LH and Palestinian militia leaders, according to the report.[41] Ghaani previously visited Syria to direct Iranian-affiliated militias to prepare to open a second front against Israel on October 15, as CTP-ISW previously reported.[42]

Syria-based, anti-Iran news outlet Eye of Euphrates released a report detailing the various Iranian-backed militias responsible for conducting attacks on US forces in the Middle East since October 18.[43] The article reported that the most senior IRGC Commander in Syria, Hajj Askar, has coordinated all attacks on US forces in Syria with the local IRGC commanders in eastern Syria through a joint operations room based in Sayyida Zainab, Rif Dimashq Province. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify this report, although it is consistent with CTP-ISW's previous reporting.

- Eye of Euphrates reported that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias Kataib Hezbollah (KH) and Asaib Ahl al Haq (AAH) were responsible for conducting at least one of the one-way drone strikes targeting al Tanf Garrison in eastern Syria. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, of which KH and AAH are both members, has claimed responsibility for two one-way drone attacks on Al Tanf Garrison since October 18.[44]
- Eye of Euphrates reported that the leader of the Iranian-affiliated Akidat militia, Hashem al Sattam, armed and directed Iranian sleeper cells active in Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-held territory to conduct strikes on US forces stationed at al Omar oil field. CTP-ISW previously reported on Iranian efforts to establish sleeper cells in SDF-held territory and warned that these cells possessed the capabilities to target US forces in eastern Syria.[45] CTP-ISW has recorded at least one attack targeting US forces stationed at al Omar oil field since October 18.[46]
- The article explained that Iranian-backed Syrian Hezbollah militants, led by Mohammad Amin Hussein al Raja and Tariq al Mayouf, and the Iranian-affiliated Sons of Jazira and Euphrates, led by Nawaf Ragheb al Bashir, conducted rocket attacks targeting US forces stationed at Conoco. According to Eye of Euphrates, the militants carried out attacks from Mazloun and Marat in Deir ez Zor Province. CTP-ISW has recorded two attacks targeting US forces stationed at Conoco Mission Support Site since October 18.[47]

Attacks against US Bases in the Middle East as of October 30, 2:00 PM ET



Iranian Parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Vahid Jalal Zadeh discussed the Israel-Hamas war with Russian parliamentarians in Moscow on October 30.[48] Jalal Zadeh met with the following individuals:

- Russian State Duma International Affairs Committee Chairman Leonid Slutsky
- Russian State Duma Defense Committee Chairman Andrey Kartapolov
- Russian State Duma member Alexander Babakov
- Russian Federation Council Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Kostantin Kosachev

Jalal Zadeh called on Russia to cooperate with Iran to stop Israeli “crimes” against Palestinians.[49] Jalal Zadeh’s visit to Moscow follows Iranian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Bagheri Kani’s October 26-27 visit to Moscow, in which he met with senior Hamas and Russian officials.[50] Jalal Zadeh will travel to Turkey after concluding his trip to Russia.

Supreme Leader Military Affairs Adviser and former IRGC Commander Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi met with Belarusian Defense Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin on the sidelines of the 10th Common Security and Lasting Peace Forum in Beijing on October 30.[51] Iranian state media

reported that the two officials discussed unspecified military cooperation.[52] Khrenin previously traveled to Tehran on July 31 to August 1 to discuss defense industry cooperation, establishing military attaches between Belarus and Iran, and conducting joint exercises. Khrenin met with Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri and Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani during the visit. [53] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Khrenin may have discussed establishing Shahed one-way attack drone factories in Belarus to support the Russian invasion of Ukraine.[54] Iranian state media separately reported that Safavi will meet with other unspecified commanders and officials attending the forum to improve cultural, economic, and political ties.[55] Safavi stated that he seeks to represent the “voice of the oppressed people of Gaza” during his meetings and speech at the forum.

- [1] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/105>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/106>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/110>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/109>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/107>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/113>; ..
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- [3] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/10/30/israel-gaza-ground-incur...>
- [4] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/10/30/israel-gaza-ground-incur...>
- [5] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/10/30/israel-gaza-ground-incur...>
- [6] <https://t.me/newpress1/56425>; <https://t.me/newpress1/56426>; <https://tw...>
- [7] <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/israel-says-it-has-killed-one-of-p...> [co.il/news/article/rkepfbaga#autoplay](https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/israel-says-it-has-killed-one-of-p...)
- [8] <https://t.me/newpress1/56437>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/116>
- [9] <https://www.almayadeen dot net/news/politics/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%AF%D9%89-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%BA%D9%84-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%AA%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%AF%D9%83-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AA>
- [10] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/118>
- [11] <https://t.me/hamasps/17247>; <https://t.me/hamasps/17238>
- [12] <https://www.ynet dot co.il/news/article/rkepfbaga#autoplay>; <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/israel-says-it-has-killed-one-of-p...>
- [13] <https://www.axios.com/2023/10/30/israeli-military-rescues-soldier-held-h...>
- [14] <https://www.axios.com/2023/10/30/israeli-military-rescues-soldier-held-h...>
- [15] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1718920147979657683>
- [16] <https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1718882024742662488>
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- [18] <https://t.me/newpress1/56337> ; https://t.me/mihwar_almuqawama/37605
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- [22] <https://t.me/newpress1/56390> ; <https://t.me/maymun5/56403> ; <https://...>
- [23] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1718920144938832013>
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- [27] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16513> ; <https://twitter.com/SARASALLOUM963/statu...>
- [28] <https://twitter.com/alishoeib1970/status/1718996306759176675> ; <https://...>
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- [30] <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1719006382626587073> ; <https://...>
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- [35] farsnews.ir/en/news/14020803000608/Lebanese-Palesinian-Resisance-Leaders-Discss-Ways-Achieve-%E2%80%98Real ; <https://www.dot> tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/08/03/2977725/%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%87%D9%85-%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%DB%8C%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86-%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%AA%D8%A3%DA%A9%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D9%87%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%86%DA%AF%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%A8%D9%87%D9%87-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%AA
- [36] <https://t.me/elamharbi/56> ; <https://t.me/elamharbi/55>
- [37] <https://t.me/elamharbi/55>
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- [46] <https://t.me/elamharbi/32>
- [47] <https://t.me/elamharbi/9> ; <https://t.me/elamharbi/32>
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IRAN UPDATE, OCTOBER 31, 2023

Iran Update, October 31, 2023

Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, Kathryn Tyson, Brian Carter, Annika Ganzeveld, and Nicholas Carl

Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm EST

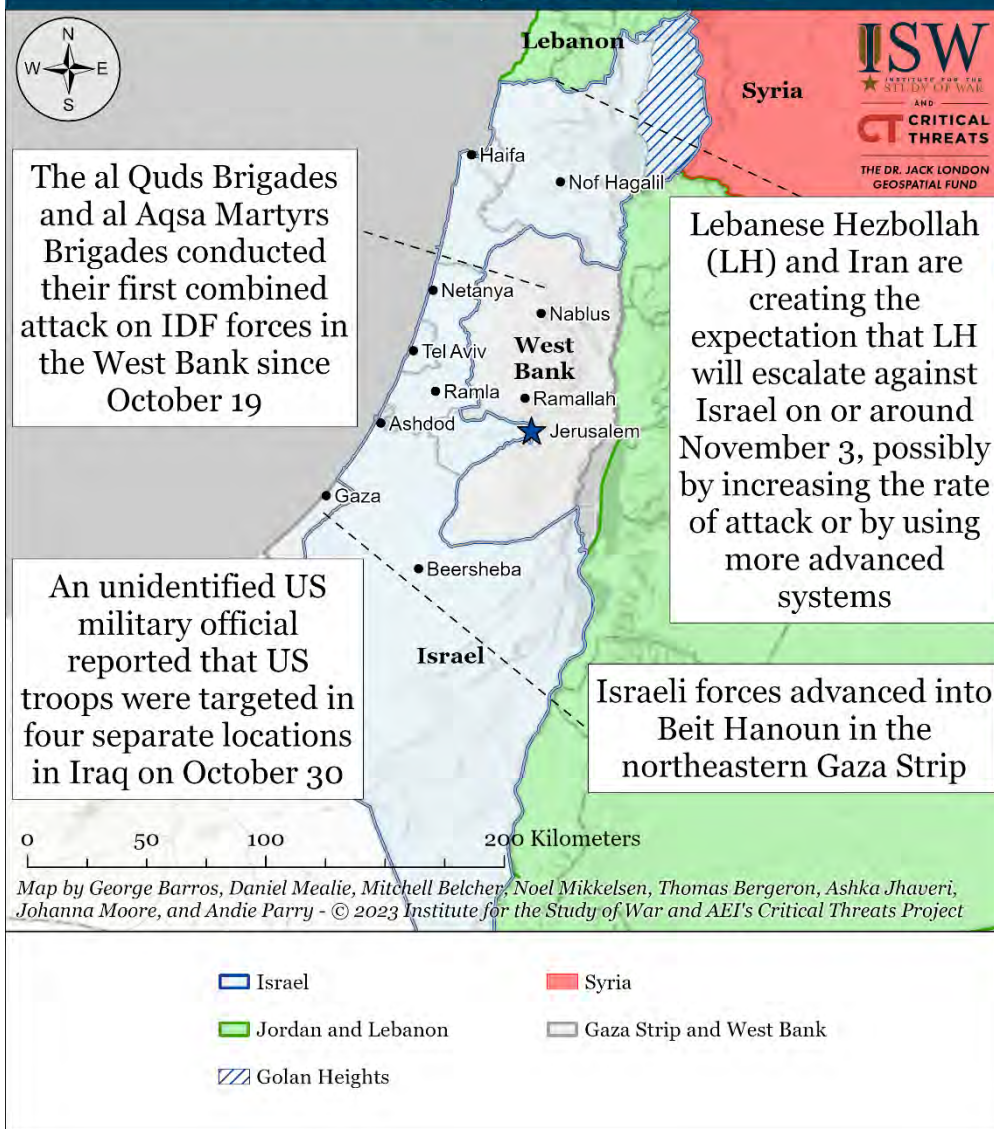
The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events. For more on developments 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 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.

Key Takeaways:

1. Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted indirect fire attacks into Israel at their usual rate. Palestinian militias continued to launch attacks on the Erez military site from the northern Gaza Strip after the IDF advanced from there on October 29.
2. Israeli forces advanced into Beit Hanoun in the northeastern Gaza Strip to conduct clearing operations. Israeli forces also extended their positions along the coastal line in the northwestern Gaza Strip.
3. Local media and Palestinian militias claimed to engage Israeli forces moving westward south of Gaza City.
4. Palestinian militants clashed with Israeli forces at their usual rate in the West Bank. Students held large, anti-Israel demonstrations across the West Bank.
5. Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted nine attacks into Israel as part of an ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets.
6. Lebanese Hezbollah and Iran are creating the expectation in the information environment that Hezbollah will escalate against Israel on or around November 3, possibly by increasing the rate of attack or by using more advanced systems.
7. The Houthis launched drones, ballistic missiles, and cruise missiles targeting Israel, marking the third attempted Houthi attack since the war began.
8. An unidentified US military official reported that unidentified militants attacked US troops in four separate locations on October 30.
9. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian traveled to Qatar for further political coordination with Hamas leadership.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 31, 2:00 PM ET

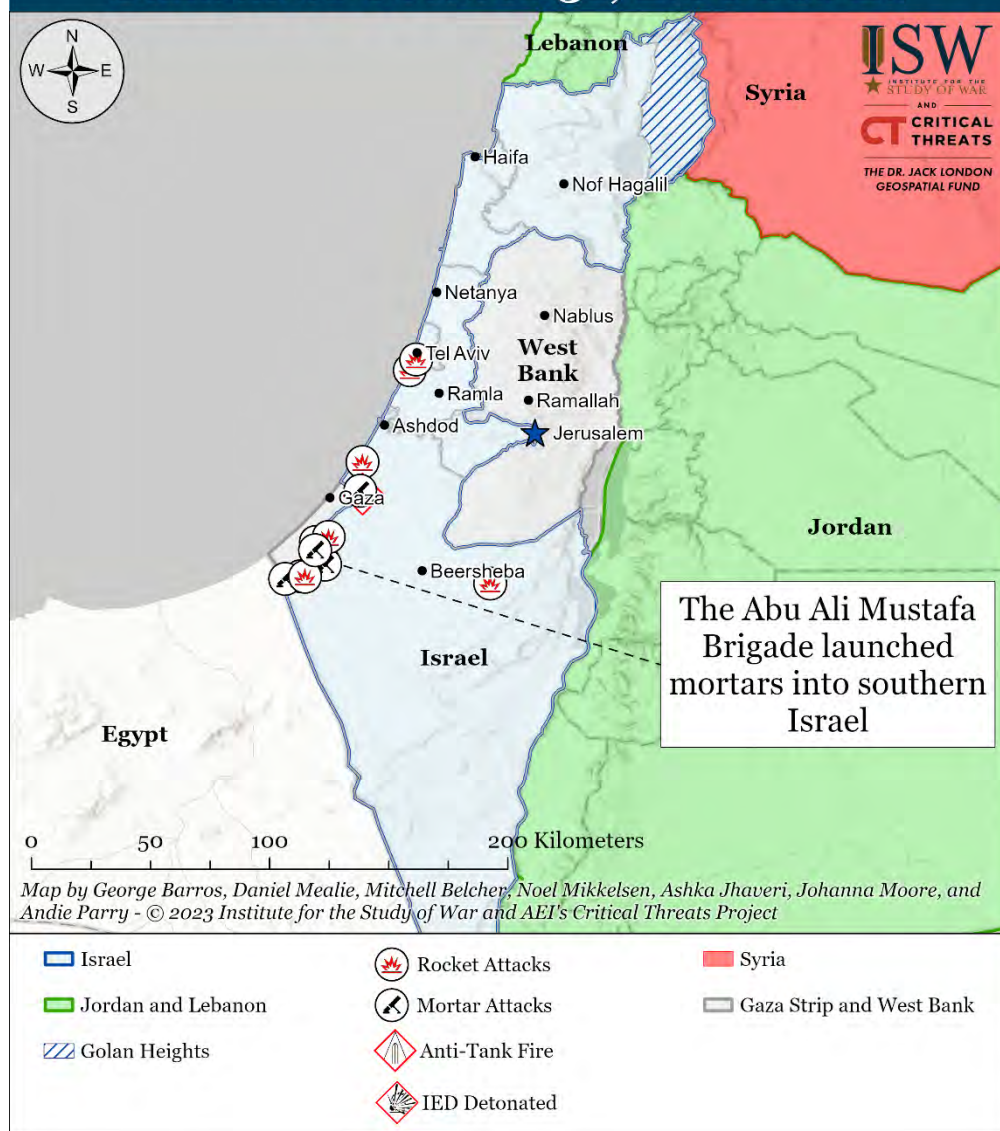


Gaza Strip

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

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 31, 2:00 PM ET

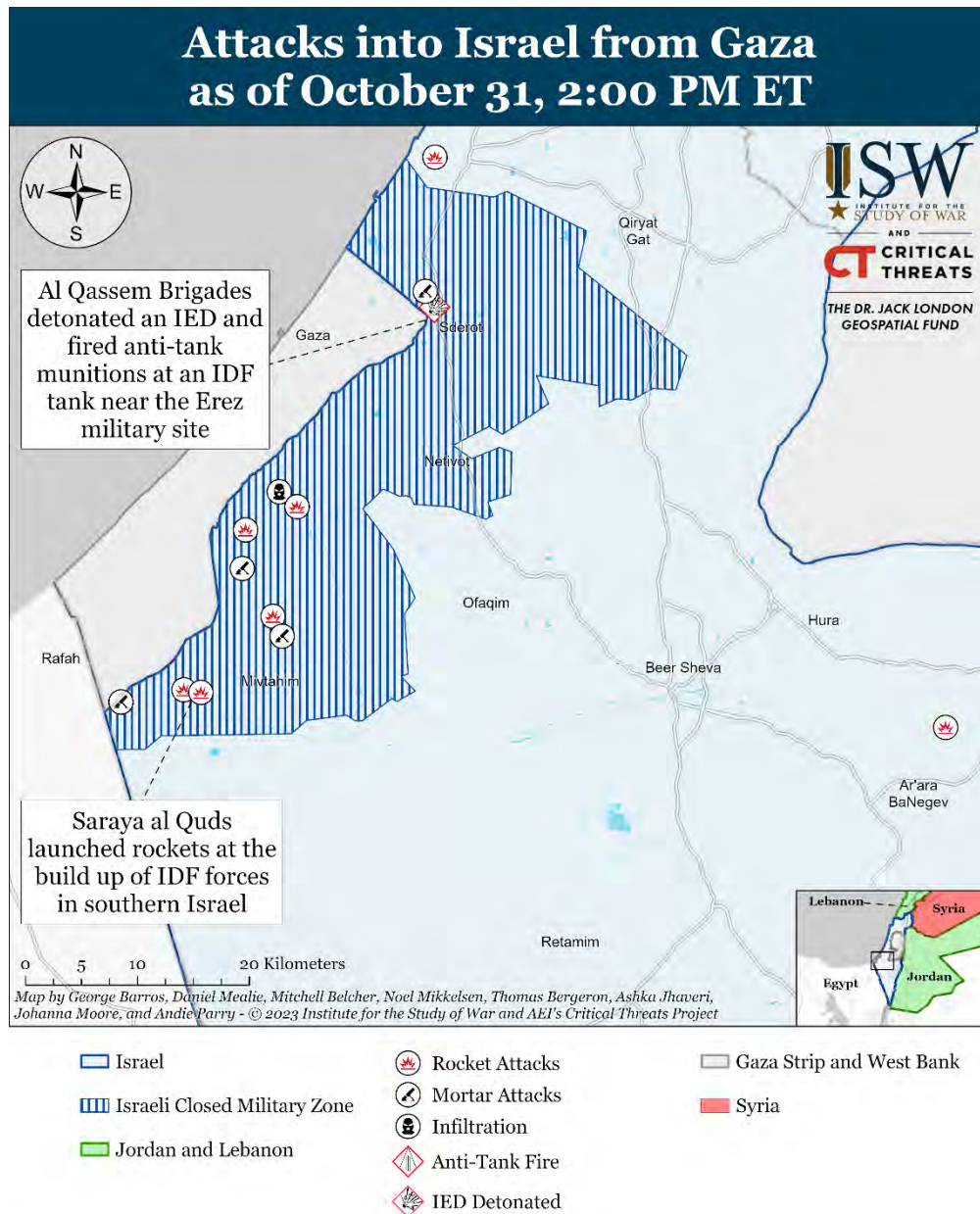


Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted indirect fire attacks into Israel at their usual rate on October 31. The al Qassem Brigades— Hamas' militant wing—claimed responsibility for 12 indirect fire attacks. The al Qassem Brigades military spokesperson said that the group will continue to strike Israel with rockets of all ranges.[1] Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for another nine indirect fire attacks. The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades—the militant wing of Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—claimed to launch mortars into southern Israel.[2] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) shot and killed a person attempting to cross from the Gaza Strip into Israel at the Reim junction, which is the first ground infiltration attempt that CTP-ISW has recorded since October 21.[3] Palestinian militias continued to launch attacks on the Erez military site from the northern Gaza Strip after the IDF advanced from there on October 29. The al Qassem Brigades detonated an IED and fired anti-tank munitions at IDF tanks east of Erez.[4] CTP-ISW cannot verify whether the attacks occurred in the Gaza Strip or Israel. The Saraya al Quds Brigades fired mortars at the Erez site.[5]

Hamas and PIJ leaders boasted about Palestinian militia resistance in the Gaza Strip. A Hamas senior leader Daoud Shihab said the resistance is on the verge of achieving a major strategic victory in the Gaza

Strip.[6] Saraya al Quds military spokesperson Abu Hamza stated that the group's jihad will continue no matter how long the war lasts.[7]



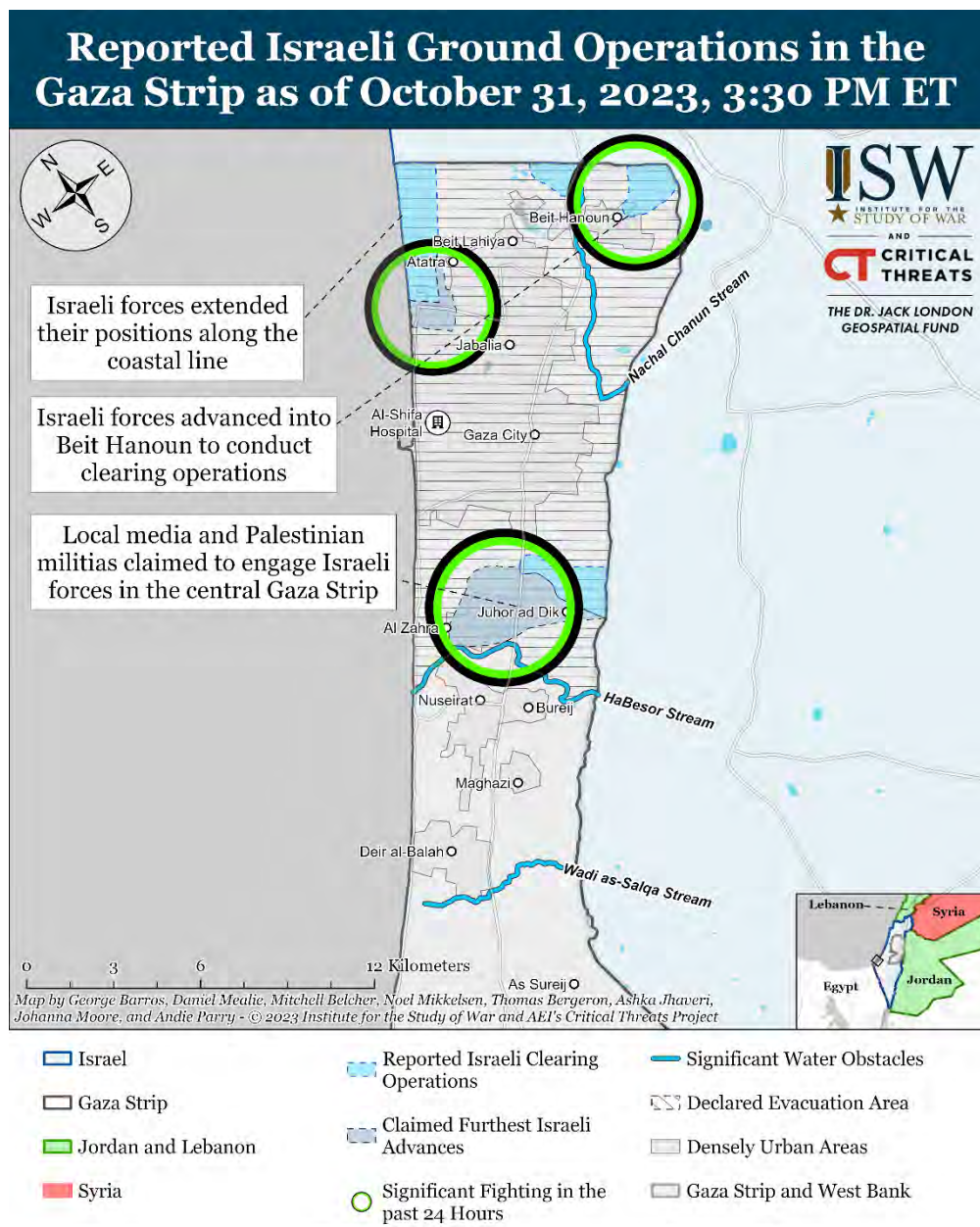
Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.
Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

Israeli forces advanced into Beit Hanoun in the northeastern Gaza Strip to conduct clearing operations. Israeli infantry and tanks maneuvered through Beit Hanoun on October 31.[8] Local media reported that Palestinian militias engaged the IDF north of Beit Hanoun.[9] The *New York Times* noted that lines of armored vehicles traveled on the Salah al Din road running north to south in the Gaza Strip and in the northeastern corner of Beit Hanoun.[10] The al Qassem Brigades attacked an IDF unit clearing a building in the area.[11] The IDF said its forces engaged in fierce battles deep inside the Gaza Strip and eliminated military infrastructure and seized weapons, including IEDs.[12] The al Qassem Brigades military spokesman said that militants have introduced various types of lethal explosive devices to the battle.[13]

Israeli forces extended their positions along the coastal line in the northwestern Gaza Strip. The *New York Times* satellite imagery showed dozens of armored vehicles cutting through open fields and amassing

in urban spaces.[14] Israeli vehicles are seen as far south as the neighborhood of al Karama, according to the *New York Times*.^[15] The Hamas-run Gazan Interior Ministry claimed that the IDF advanced to al Karama from the northwestern Gaza Strip.^[16] The Saraya al Quds Brigades launched mortars at IDF vehicles west of al Karama.^[17]

Local media and Palestinian militias claimed to engage Israeli forces moving westward south of Gaza City. The al Qassem Brigades, Saraya al Quds Brigades, and al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade attacked IDF forces in the central Gaza Strip.^[18] Al Qassem Brigades militants claimed to destroy four vehicles with anti-tank munitions at the Netzarim junction, although CTP-ISW has seen no evidence that these claims are true.^[19] A Palestinian journalist claimed that the IDF is operating inside outposts near the al Nour resort and near the Tika hospital after advancing westward from Samouni neighborhood.^[20] The Hamas-run Interior Ministry claimed that Israeli vehicles on the Sala al Din road are trying to reach the al Rashid Street less than three kilometers away on the coast.^[21] The locations of clashes are consistent with the Israeli-declared evacuation zone north of the HeBesor stream.^[22]



West Bank

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

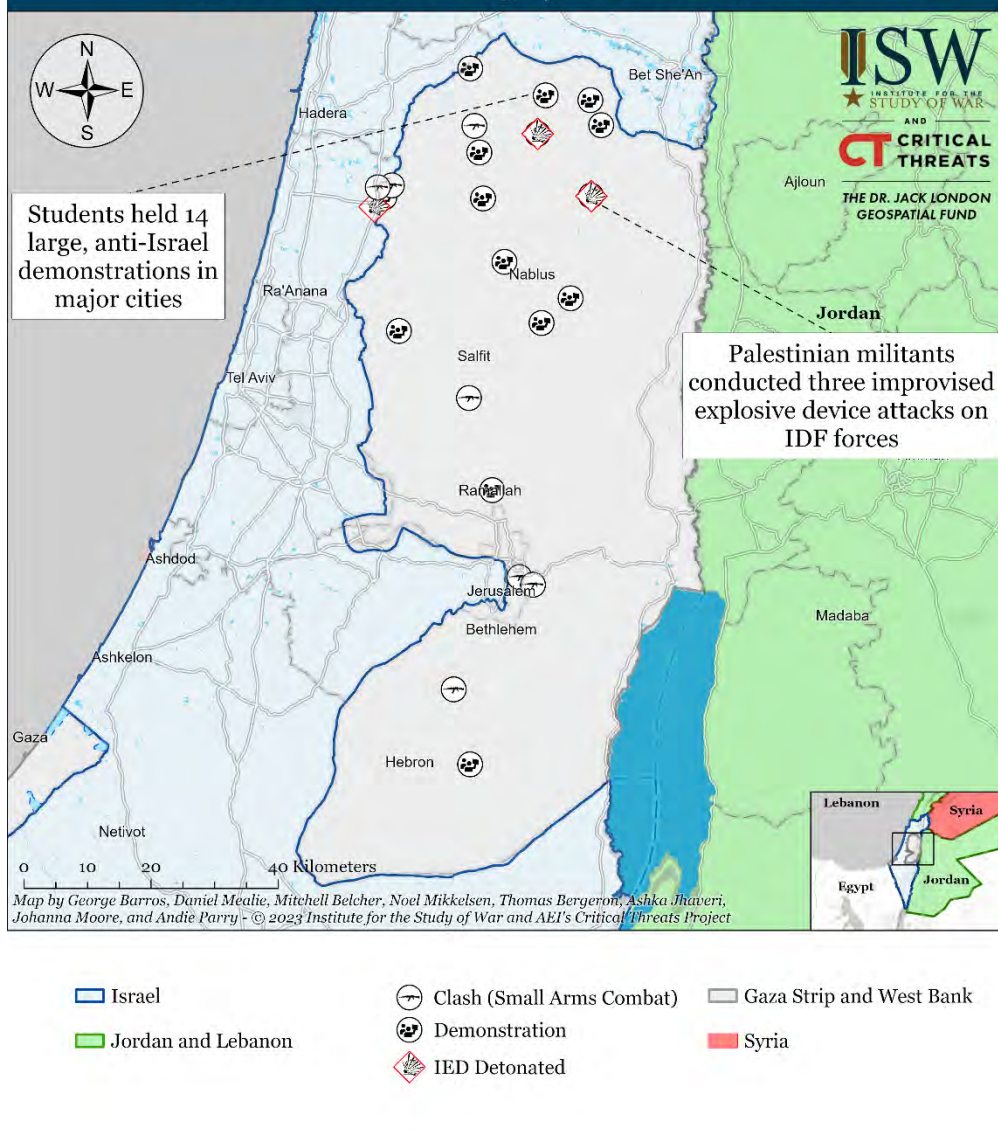
Palestinian militants clashed with Israeli forces at their usual rate in the West Bank on October

31. CTP-ISW recorded ten small arms clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces.^[23] Palestinian militants also conducted three IED attacks on Israeli forces.^[24] The al Quds Brigades and the Tulkarm Battalion of the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades conducted a combined small arms attack on Israeli forces in Shuweika near Tulkarm, indicating growing coordination between the two groups.^[25] This was the first combined attack between the al Quds Brigades and al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in the West Bank since October 19.^[26]

Students held large, anti-Israel demonstrations across the West Bank on October 31. Students held 14 anti-Israel demonstrations in major cities in the West Bank, including Bethlehem, Jenin, and Tulkarm.^[27] These are consistent with the rate of demonstrations that CTP-ISW has observed in the last few weeks.

Senior Hamas leader Daoud Shehab said on October 30 that the al Quds Brigades is “leading the way” in the West Bank.^[28] This remark is noteworthy in that it reflects a prominent Hamas official framing PIJ as one of the lead Palestinian militias fighting Israel in the West Bank. The al Quds Brigades has regularly claimed attacks targeting Israeli forces in the West Bank since October 7.^[29] CTP-ISW has consistently reported on the close coordination between Hamas and PIJ throughout the war.

Clashes in the West Bank as of October 31, 2:00 PM ET



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

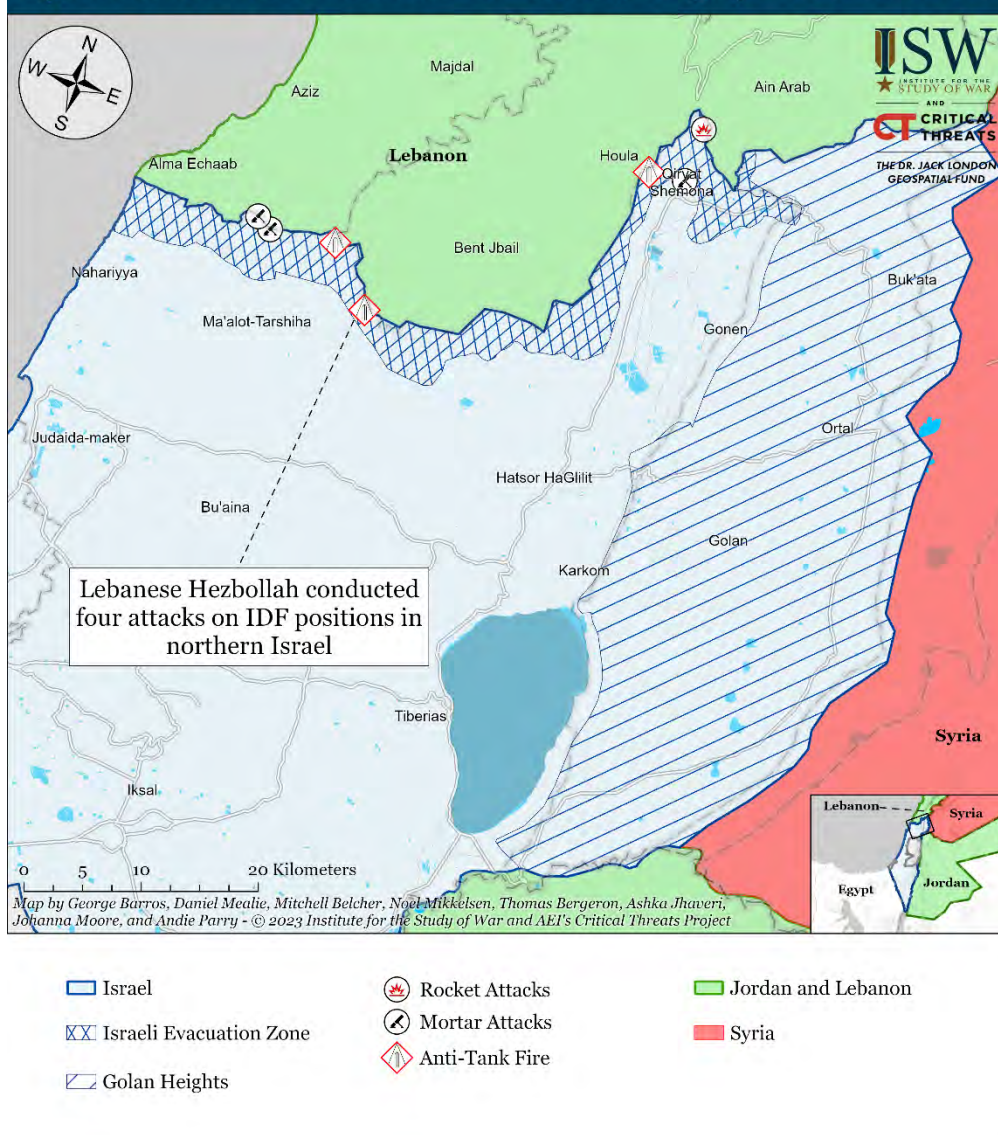
Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), conducted nine attacks into Israel as part of an ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets. LH claimed four mortar and anti-tank missile attacks on IDF positions in northern Israel on October 31.[30] Unknown militants conducted four anti-tank, rocket, mortar, and small arms attacks into northern Israel as well.[31] Unknown militants also fired two rockets, which the IDF reported did not cross into Israeli territory.[32] The IDF continues to conduct airstrikes and artillery on militants, who are attempting to launch indirect fire from southern Lebanon into northern Israel.[33]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Syria and Lebanon as of October 31, 2:00 PM ET



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

LH and Iran are creating the expectation in the information environment that LH will escalate against Israel on or around November 3, possibly by increasing the rate of attack or by using more advanced systems. LH has released two dramatic videos in recent days ahead of LH Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah's planned speech on November 3, which creates the expectation of a significant announcement on the Israel-Hamas War.[34] This speech is significant in that it will be Nasrallah's first public statement on the war. Iranian state media has further amplified the news of the upcoming speech and the dramatic videos, describing them as a "sign of future events." Iranian state media also compared Nasrallah's upcoming speech to the one he delivered at the beginning of the 2006 Israel-LH war.[35] Nasrallah's speech and the two LH videos come as LH is coordinating extensively with Hamas, PIJ, and the IRGC Quds Force in Beirut.[36] The speech and videos also come as the Houthis threatened that it will "continue its

strikes with rockets and drones until the Israeli aggression stops” during its statement claiming responsibility for three attacks against Israel since October 18.[37] Iranian state media has framed the Houthis’ statement as a declaration of war against Israel.[38]

It is possible that Nasrallah will make an escalatory statement on November 3, promising retaliation against Israel but refrain from taking any immediate action different from what LH has been already doing along the Israel-Lebanon border. LH and Nasrallah have used a similar pattern of rhetoric previously. For example, Nasrallah said in April 2023 that Israeli actions in early that year “may push the region into a major war.”[39] LH did not conduct any major escalatory moves in the weeks following this statement. An unspecified source “familiar with [LH] thinking” claimed to Reuters on October 26 that LH does not want Lebanon’s destruction or to see Lebanese civilians fleeing from southern Lebanon, where LH maintains prominent influence.[40]

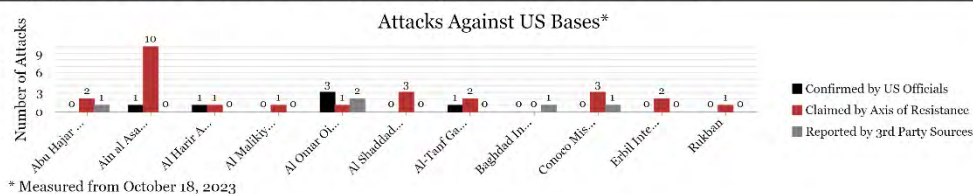
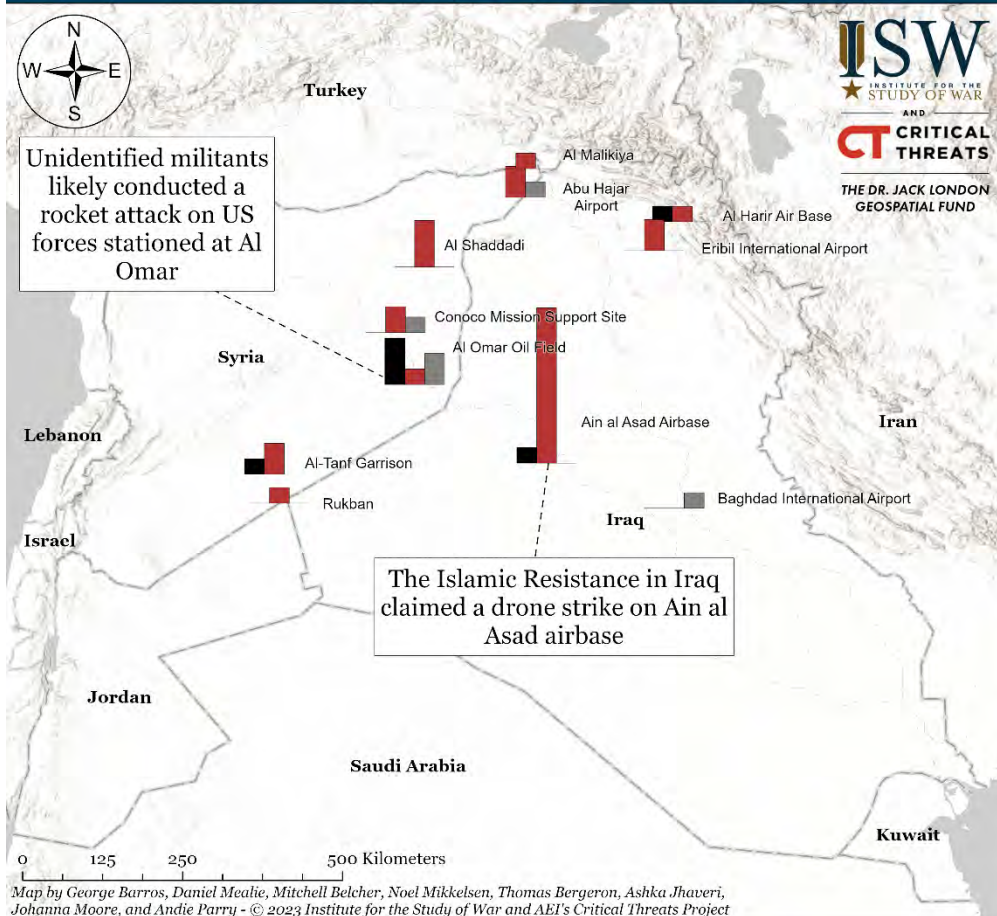
The Houthis launched drones, ballistic missiles, and cruise missiles targeting Israel on October 31.[41] Israel intercepted the drones and missiles using its Arrow anti-ballistic missile system and fighter jets.[42] Users on social media posted an image showing a destroyed Quds-4 cruise missile in Jordan on October 31.[43] The Houthi movement possesses drones, ballistic, and cruise missiles capable of hitting Israel.[44] This marks the third attempted Houthi attack on Israel since the war began.

An unidentified US military official reported that unidentified militants attacked US troops in four separate locations on October 30. CTP-ISW previously reported that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed two separate rocket attacks targeting US forces stationed at Ain al Asad airbase and Conoco Mission Support Site on October 30.[45] The following text details the attacks that CTP-ISW has not yet reported.

- Local Syrian and Iraqi social media accounts reported that unidentified militants conducted a rocket attack on US forces stationed at al Omar oil field on October 30.[46] The militants launched between five and 15 rockets at the US position. CTP-ISW has recorded at least five attacks targeting US forces stationed at al Omar oil field since October 18, one of which was claimed by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. Eye of Euphrates claimed that Iranian sleeper cells active in Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-held territory have similarly attacked US forces stationed at al Omar oil field in recent days, as CTP-ISW previously reported.[47]
- The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed a second attack targeting US forces stationed at Ain al Asad airbase on October 30.[48] The group’s statement claimed its forces conducted a drone strike on Ain al Asad airbase and successfully hit their target. Local Iraqi outlet Shafaq reported that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq launched two drones in the attack and that both were downed by the defensive systems at the airbase.[49]

The secretary general of the Iranian-backed Iraqi Badr Organization, Hadi al Ameri, argued that International Coalition forces should leave Iraq in a statement given to local media on October 30.[50] Ameri claimed that there was no longer any justification for International Coalition forces to remain in Iraq to support counter-ISIS operations because Iraqi security forces defeated ISIS at its height in 2015. The United States currently has non-combat troops stationed in Iraq operating in an advisory capacity to support counter-ISIS missions under Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR).[51] Ameri also asserted that International Coalition forces present in Iraq are limiting the growth of Iraqi security institutions. Ameri argued that Iranian-backed Iraqi militia attacks on US forces were a “natural reaction” to US support for Israel. The Badr Organization threatened to attack US forces in the region if the United States intervened in the Israel-Hamas war on October 9.[52] US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin reported that the United States will “take further necessary measures” to protect US forces stationed in the Middle East if Iranian-backed attacks continue.[53]

Attacks against US Bases in the Middle East as of October 31, 2:00 PM ET



Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian traveled to Qatar for further political coordination with Hamas leadership. Abdollahian met with Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh in Doha on October 31, marking the second time these officials have met there since October 15.^[54] Abdollahian warned about the possible expansion of the Israel-Hamas war, stating that members of the Axis of Resistance “do not necessarily wait for political decisions” to act against Israel. Abdollahian also criticized US calls for restraint, claiming that the United States is “practically a party in the war.” These statements are consistent with the ongoing Iranian information operation to frame the United States and Israel as responsible for any further escalation of the war.^[55]

Abdollahian also met with other unspecified senior Hamas officials, Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, and Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman bin Jassim al Thani during his visit to Qatar.^[56] Abdollahian last traveled to Qatar on October 14 following his diplomatic tour to Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria to coordinate with senior leaders in the Axis of Resistance, as CTP-ISW previously reported.^[57] Abdollahian will travel to Turkey after concluding his current visit to Qatar.^[58]

[1] <https://t.me/hamasps/17285>

[2] <https://t.me/QudsN/321444>

[3] <https://twitter.com/IDFSpokesperson/status/1719130587133268069>
[4] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/125>
[5] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16532>
[6] <https://t.me/almanarnews/134003>
[7] <https://t.me/almanarnews/133982>
[8] <https://twitter.com/GeoConfirmed/status/1719313872350310537>
[9] <https://t.me/beitlahiaNews/4939>
[10] <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/10/30/world/middleeast/israel-i...>
[11] <https://t.me/newpress1/56536>
[12] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1719322411240231274>
[13] <https://t.me/hamasps/17284>
[14] <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/10/30/world/middleeast/israel-i...>
[15] <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/10/30/world/middleeast/israel-i...>
[16] <https://t.me/QudsN/321427>
[17] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16538>
[18] https://t.me/C_Military1/38251; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1719392737470931208>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/133>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16541>; <https://t.me/AymanGouda/5817>
[19] <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1719392737470931208>
[20] <https://x.com/ytirawi/status/1719332668624556370?s=20>
[21] <https://t.me/QudsN/321430>
[22] <https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1718240244129059167>; <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-gaza-hamas-war-c8b4fc20e4fd2ef381d5edb7e9e8308c>;
[23] https://t.me/Palestine_news_Update/1475; <https://t.me/almanarnews/134035>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321224>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321153>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321135>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321087>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321058>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321048>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321048>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321224>
[24] <https://t.me/almanarnews/134010>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321311>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/134035>
[25] <https://t.me/alredalsrey/414>
[26] <https://t.me/almanarnews/131642>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/131636>; <https://t.me/maymun5/53752>;
https://www.mako.co.il/news-law_guide?partner=NewsNavBar; <https://t.me/maymun5/53675>; https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/police-say-10-officers-wounded-in-explosion-during-idf-raid-in-tulkarem/; <https://www.almanar.com.lb/11086649>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16400>; <https://t.me/AymanGouda/5766>
[27] <https://t.me/QudsN/321490>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321423>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321417>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321415>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321356>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321351>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321340>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321280>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321279>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321277>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321273>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321257>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321232>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321221>
[28] <https://t.me/almanarnews/134002>
[29] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16460>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16475>; <https://t.me/almanarnews/133209>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16496>
[30] <https://t.me/Tura313/46250>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321440>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321491>; <https://t.me/QudsN/321504>
[31] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1719329008888803747>; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1719347850125930502>; <https://twitter.com/JoeTruzman/status/1719355047145029678>; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1719347850125930502>
[32] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1719329012315517096>
[33] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1719396555029958800>; <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1719347220598698470>
[34] <https://x.com/MattMcBradley/status/1718634078776283189?s=20>; <https://x.com/MattMcBradley/status/1719424464234942797?s=20>; <https://twitter.com/MarioNawfal/status/1719403435588497437>
[35] <https://www.farsnews.ir/media/14020808000280/%D9%88%D8%A7%DA%A9%D9%86%D8%B4-BBC-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%AF%D8%A6%D9%88%DB%8C-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B4%D8%B1-%D8%B4%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%AF%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86-%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87>; <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/626699/%D8%B1%DA%98%DB%8C%D9%85-%D8%B5%D9%87%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%B4%D8%AA-%D8%B8%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1->

%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D8%B5%D9%81%D8%AD%D9%87-%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%B2%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%86%D8%AE%D8%B3%D8%AA%DB%8C%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%A7%DA%A9%D9%86%D8%B4-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86-%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%B5%D9%87%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA%E2%80%8C%D9%87%D8%A7-%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%84%D9%85

[36] <https://amwaj.media/article/axis-gaza-qaani>

[37] <https://twitter.com/army21ye/status/1719340968812425410>; <https://twitter.com/army21ye/status/1719345629208412584>

[38] <https://www.yjc.ir/fa/news/8585761/%DB%8C%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%85%D8%A7-%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%AC%D9%86%DA%AF-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A6%DB%8C%D9%84-%D8%B4%D8%AF>; <https://www.mehrnews.com/amp/5926843/>

[39] <https://twitter.com/AlMayadeenNews/status/1646893284529405952>

[40] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/broken-lebanon-cannot-afford-war-hezbollah-knows-it-2023-10-26/>

[41] <https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/1719358280126849451?s=20>

[42] <https://x.com/IAFsite/status/1719312710947533140?s=20>; <https://x.com/IAFsite/status/1719331767277003175?s=20>

[43] <https://x.com/BashaReport/status/1719408013079929224?s=20>

[44] <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Yemen%E2%80%99s-Houthis-and-the-expansion-of-Iran%E2%80%99s-Axis-of-Resistance.pdf?x91208>; <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/military-balance/2023/10/little-and-large-missile-surprises-in-sanaa-and-tehran/>

[45] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-30-2023>

[46] <https://twitter.com/OALD24/status/1718901924617957764> ; https://twitter.com/Tammuz_Intel/status/1718915545238507905 ; <https://twitter.com/HamamIssa7/status/1718945053458964859>

[47] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-30-2023>

[48] <https://t.me/elamharbi/57>

[49] <https://shafaq.com/ar/>

[50] https://twitter.com/murad_ismael/status/1719018293447512155 ; <https://www.shafaq.com/ar/>

[51] <https://www.inherentresolve.mil/WHO-WE-ARE/>

[52] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-11-2023>

[53] <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3570798/secretary-...>

[54] <https://www.isna.ir/news/1402080906855>

[55] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-24-2023>

[56] <https://www.hamshahrionline.ir/news/803332>

[57] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-14-2023>

[58] <https://www.hamshahrionline.ir/news/803332>