

## Iran Update, November 15, 2023

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**Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm EST**

*The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events. For more on developments in Iran and the region, see our [interactive map of Iran and the Middle East](#).*

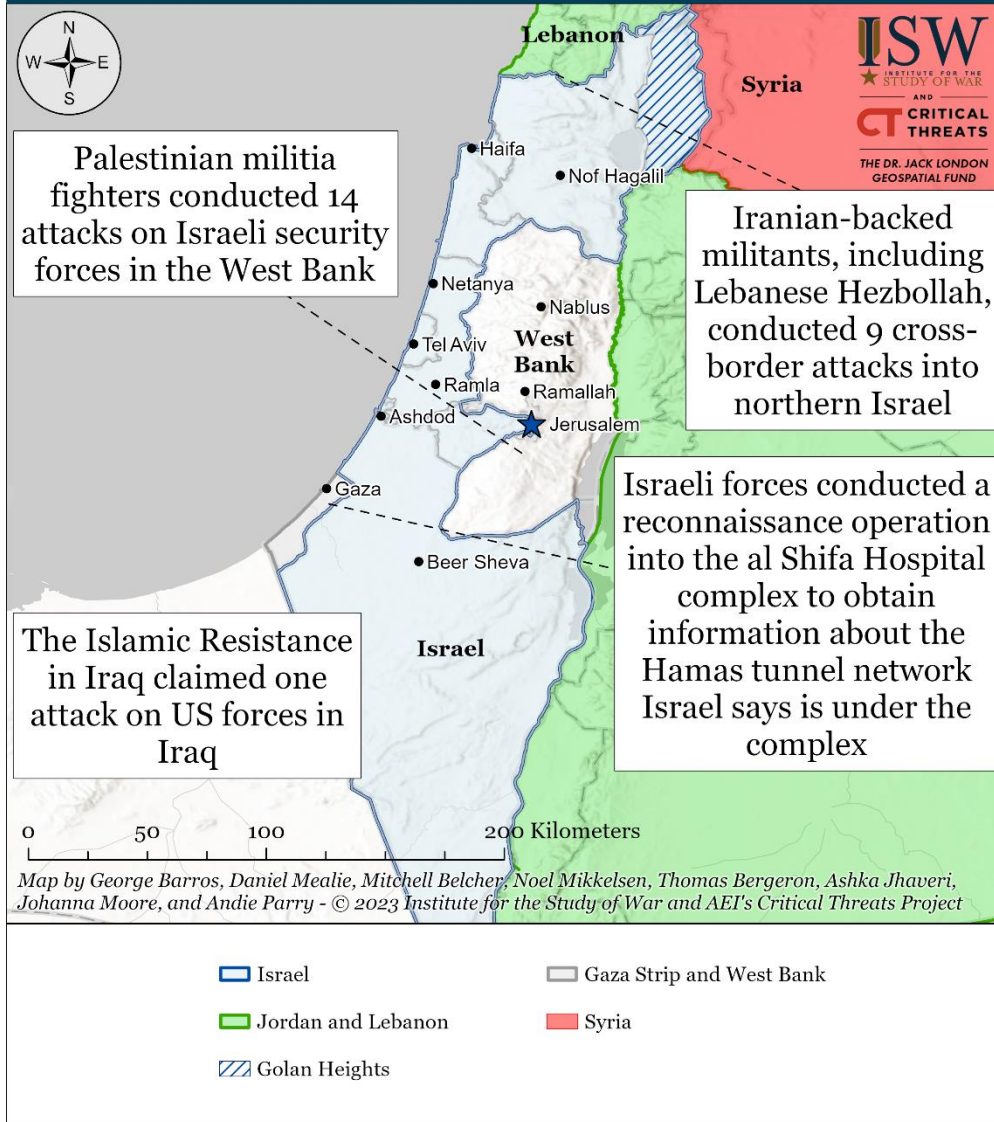
*Note: CTP and ISW have refocused the update to cover the Israel-Hamas war. The new sections address developments in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as noteworthy activity from Iran's Axis of Resistance. We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are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

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

### **Key Takeaways:**

1. Israeli forces conducted a reconnaissance operation into the al Shifa Hospital complex on November 14-15 to obtain information about the Hamas tunnel network Israel says is under the complex.
2. Qatari mediators continued efforts to facilitate an agreement between Hamas and Israel to release 50 civilian hostages in return for a three-day ceasefire.
3. Palestinian militia fighters conducted 14 attacks on Israeli security forces in the West Bank on November 15.
4. Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), conducted 9 cross-border attacks into northern Israel on November 15.
5. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi proxies—claimed one attack on a US base in Iraq.
6. Western media reported that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei complained that Hamas did not warn Iran about its October 7 attack during his meeting with Hamas Political Bureau Head Esmail Haniyeh in Tehran on November 5, citing Iranian and Hamas officials.

# Israel-Hamas War as of November 15, 2023, 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

**Israeli forces conducted a reconnaissance operation into the al Shifa Hospital complex on November 14-15 to obtain information about the Hamas tunnel network Israel says is under the complex.** US military doctrine defines a reconnaissance operation as “a mission

undertaken to obtain, by visual observation or other detection methods, information about the activities and resources of an enemy or adversary or to secure data concerning the...geographic characteristics of a particular area.”[1] Israeli officials said that IDF units entered the hospital grounds to “locate a Hamas tunnel hub that connects the hospital” with other areas.”[2] Israeli forces approaching from the east killed four Hamas fighters who engaged them with small arms fire, presumably on the eastern side of the hospital.[3] Israeli forces searched buildings throughout the complex and questioned Palestinians in the facility.[4] Israeli efforts to search facilities, question individuals, and locate tunnel hubs are consistent with a reconnaissance operation. Israeli forces also released images, video, and statements saying that they discovered an “operational headquarters.”[5] The images and video show a limited amount of equipment labeled with Hamas insignia and iconography.[6] This refutes the Hamas claims that it was not using the hospital for any military purposes.[7]

**Israeli forces also provided humanitarian aid to the al Shifa Hospital.** A senior Israeli official told the *Wall Street Journal* that Israeli forces left portable incubators, baby food, and medical supplies at the hospital’s front gate and the staff was informed they could take the supplies.[8] The same official added that the incubators could be used in ambulances to transport babies to safer areas in southern Gaza or to Egypt or Israel. The official presumably meant via the evacuation corridor Israel established east of the hospital that most likely connects to Salah al Din Road. Salah al Din Road is the primary north-south humanitarian corridor that Israel established early in the war.[9] The senior Israeli official said that the final decision on where to take the babies would be up to doctors in the hospital.[10]

**Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) have attacked Israeli forces east of the hospital—where Israel is attempting to establish an evacuation corridor—on several occasions since November 10.**[11] Israeli officials reported on November 14 that Hamas fired on the humanitarian corridor.[12] This is consistent with reporting from official media arms of Palestinian militias, local reporters, independent news aggregators, and Western media highlighting Hamas and PIJ attacks targeting Israeli forces east of the hospital. A Gaza-focused account on X (Twitter) said that Hamas fighters attacked Israeli forces northeast of the hospital on November 10, and PIJ reported on November 11 and November 13 that it was engaged in “fierce clashes” near the al Shifa Hospital.[13] A Palestinian journalist reported that Hamas fighters attacked an Israeli unit east of al Shifa on November 11.[14] Satellite imagery from November 14 also showed large smoke plumes caused by fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters east of the hospital and along the area that presumably connects al Shifa to Salah al Din Road.[15] Palestinian fighters also fired at Israeli forces approaching the hospital compound from the east on November 14.[16]

**Palestinian militia fighters continued to harass Israeli forces in southern Gaza City governorate on November 15 using indirect fire and improvised explosive devices (IED).** The al Quds Brigades mortared Israeli forces entering Juhor ad Dik, presumably from Israel.[17] The group also fired unspecified rockets targeting IDF units near al Azhar University and al Nour Resort, west of Juhor ad Dik.[18] The al Qassem brigades fired short-range 114mm rockets targeting Israeli forces in the same general vicinity, south of Gaza City.[19] Al Qassem Brigades infantry separately ambushed IDF infantry and a bulldozer using anti-armor and anti-personnel IEDs east of Juhor ad Dik.[20] It is notable that no Palestinian militant organization has released footage demonstrating their ability to destroy Israeli armor since the ground operation began.

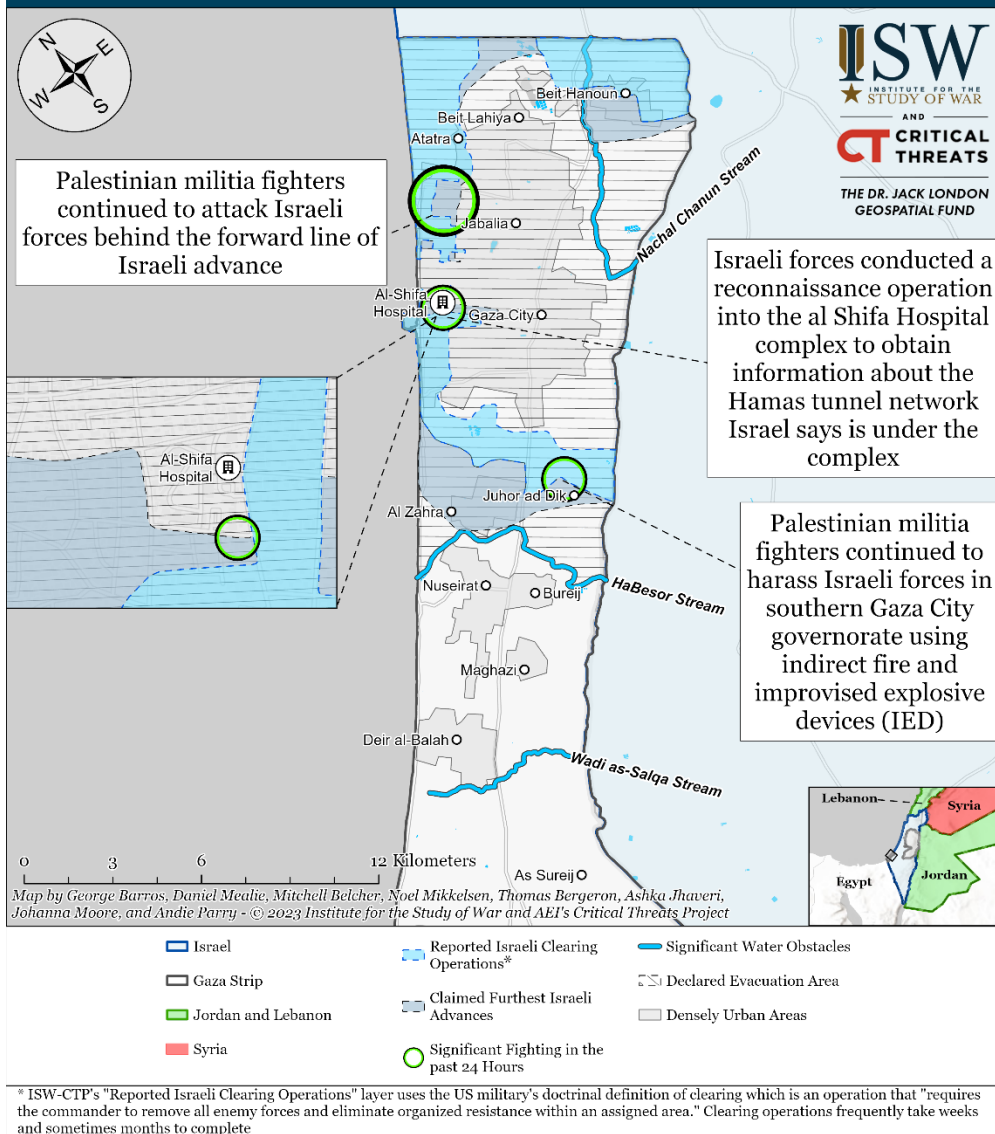
**Israeli forces continued their clearing operations in northwestern Gaza City on November 14-15.** Palestinian fighters continued attacks targeting Israeli forces in northwestern Gaza City, which is consistent with the doctrinal definition of clearing operations.[21] Palestinian fighters engaged IDF forces with small arms near al Mukhabarat Street, western Gaza City, on November 14.[22] The Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade fired 60mm mortars at IDF armor and infantry near the al Maqousi area, west of Sheikh Radwan on November 15.[23]

Qatari mediators continued efforts to facilitate an agreement between Hamas and Israel to release 50 civilian hostages in return for a three-day ceasefire.[24] Israel would also release some Palestinian women and children and increase the amount of aid to Gaza.[25] Officials familiar with the negotiations said that Hamas agreed to the deal's "general outlines" but Israel is continuing to negotiate on some details.[26] Israeli War Cabinet member Benny Gantz said that even if Israel needs to "pause" fighting, it will not stop the war until Israel "achieves its goals." [27]

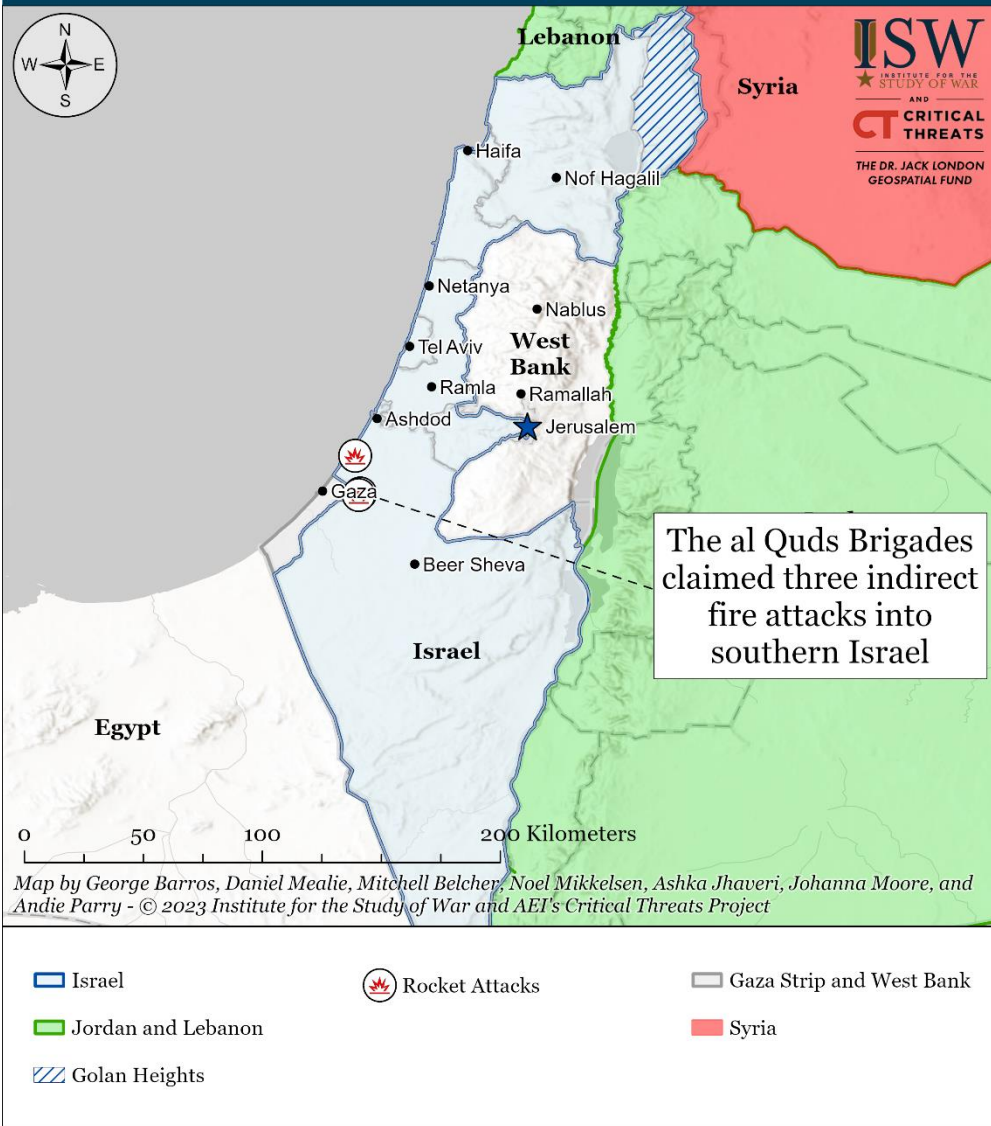
The Palestinian Islamic Jihad said on November 14 that it will hold its hostages until it obtains a "better" deal from Israel to exchange Palestinian prisoners for hostages.[28]

Palestinian militias conducted four attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israel on November 15. The al Quds Brigades claimed three indirect fire attacks.[29] Unspecified Palestinian fighters launched one anti-tank guided missile targeting Israeli forces near Kissufim.[30]

# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of November 15, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



# Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of November 15, 2023, 2:00 PM ET

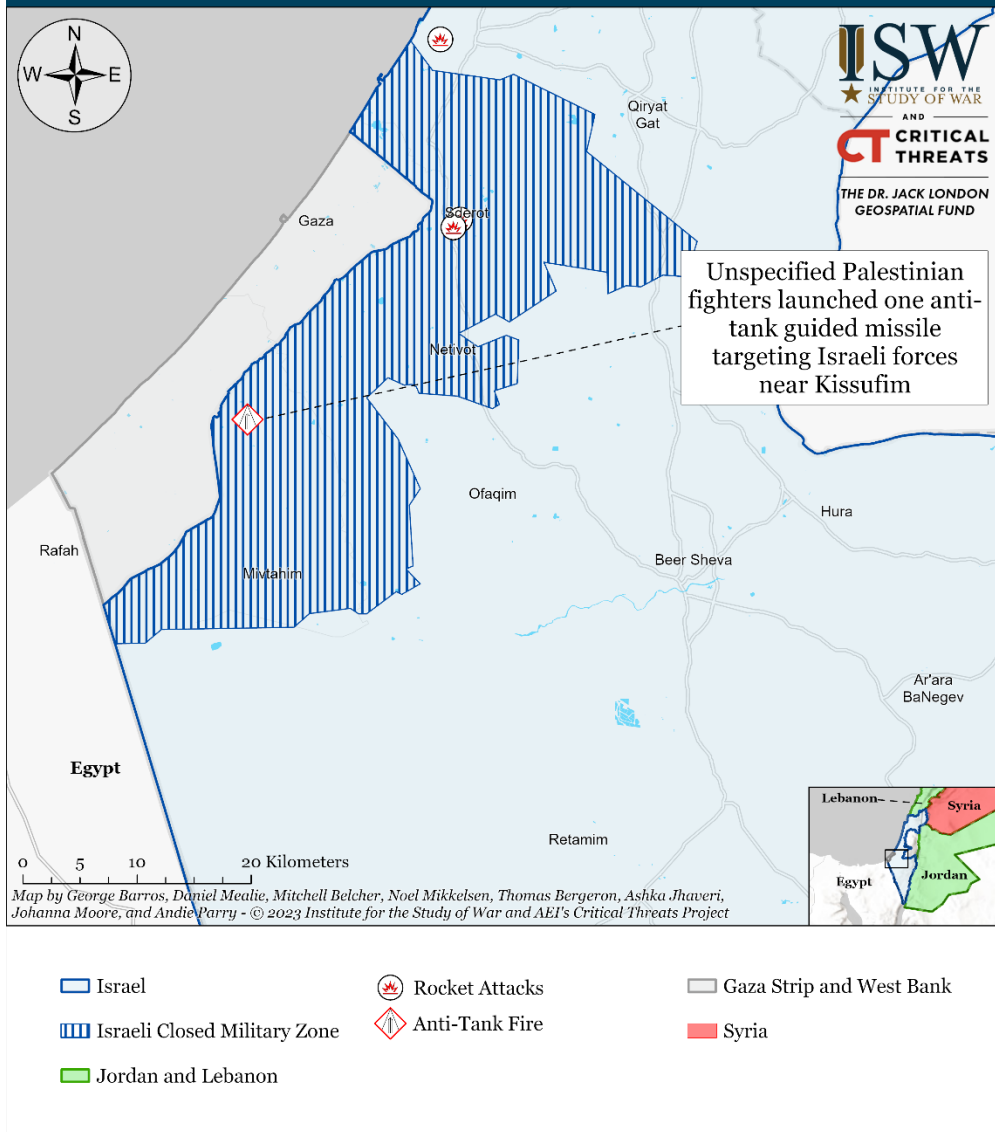


Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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



# Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of November 15, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



*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

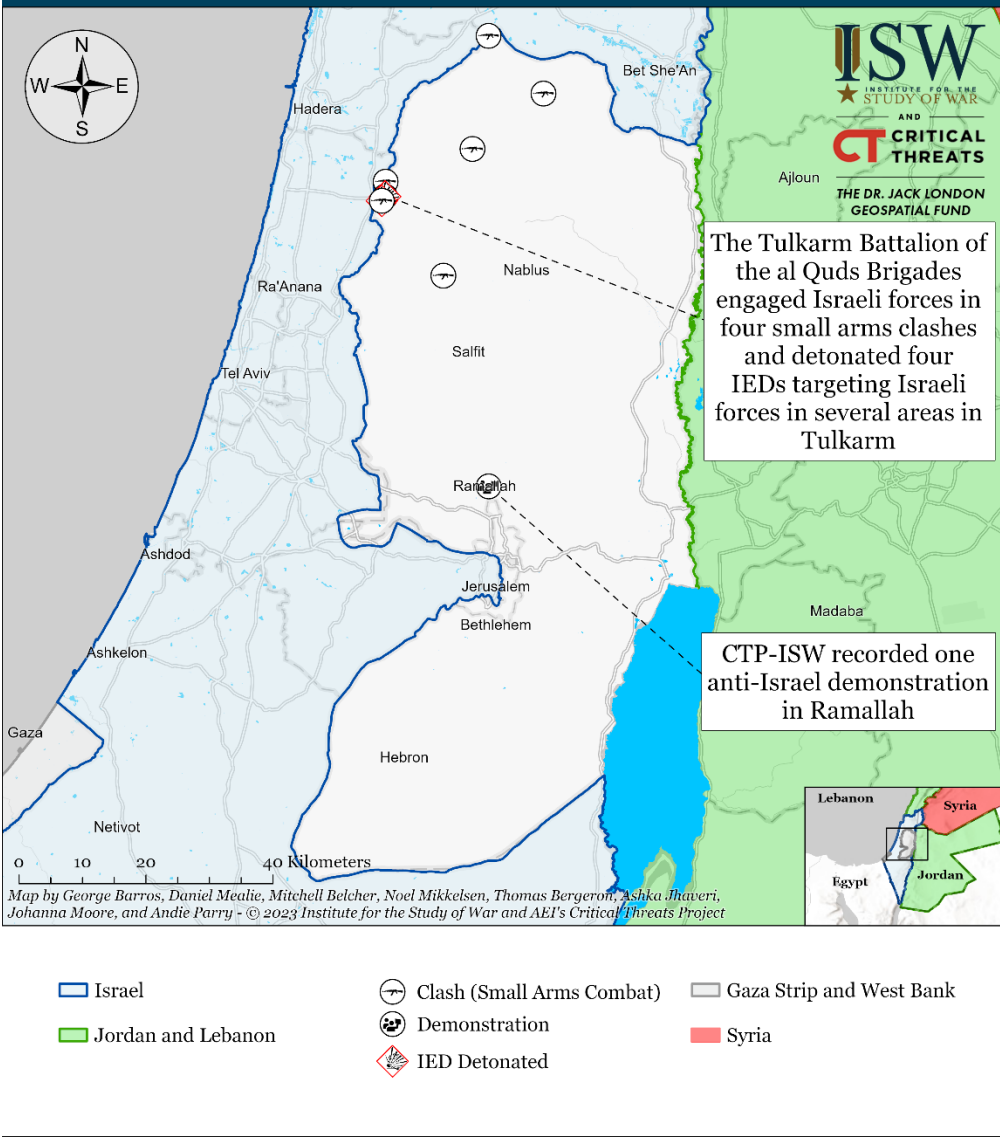
**Palestinian militia fighters conducted 14 attacks on Israeli security forces in the West Bank on November 15.[31]** The Tulkarm Battalion of the al Quds Brigades engaged Israeli forces in four small arms clashes and detonated four IEDs targeting Israeli forces in several areas in Tulkarm on November 14.[32] The Tulkarm Battalion of the al Quds Brigades announced that seven of its members died during the clashes.[33] The Tulkarm Rapid Response Battalion of the al Aqsa

Martyrs' Brigade separately engaged Israeli security forces with small arms fire in Tulkarm on November 15.[34] The Hornets' Nest of the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, which operates in the Jenin camp, announced on November 14 that Israeli forces had arrested two of its members.[35] CTP-ISW recorded one anti-Israel demonstration in Ramallah.[36]

**Hamas said on November 15 that Israeli forces detained dozens of students at Hebron University.[37]** The IDF said on November 15 it had arrested 28 “wanted persons” in the West Bank, including Hamas fighters, in an ongoing arrest campaign.[38] The IDF said that it had arrested Hamas operatives in a “student dormitory,” likely referring to Hebron University.[39] Hamas also called for an escalation in attacks against Israeli forces in the West Bank by “all available means.” Hamas has repeatedly called for attacks and demonstrations in the West Bank since the Israel-Hamas war began, but the calls have so far failed to generate widespread attacks or protests.[40]



# Clashes in the West Bank as of November 15, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



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

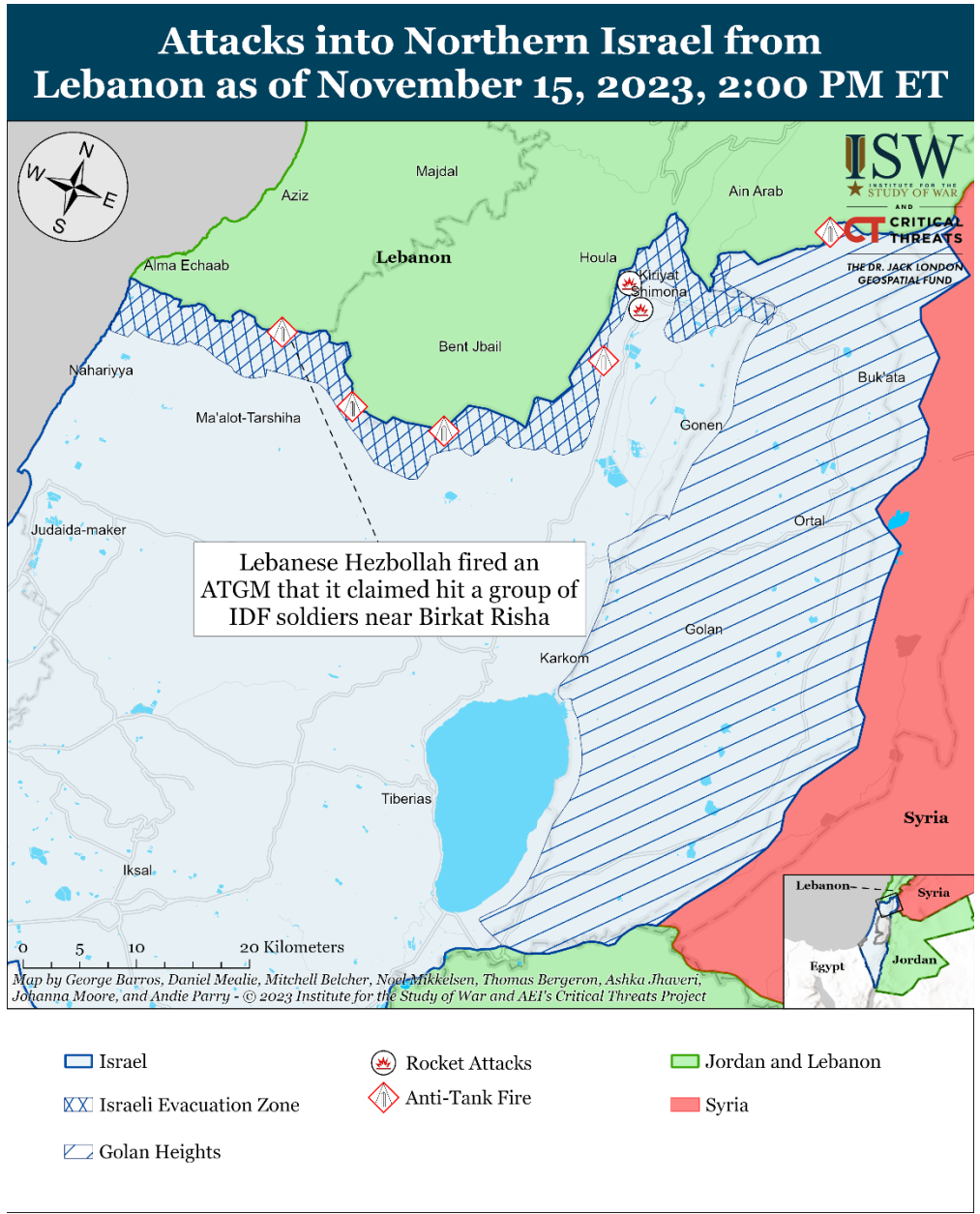
## Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

### 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 9 cross-border attacks into northern Israel on November 15.** LH claimed five rocket and ATGM attacks on IDF soldiers and military bases and one ATGM attack on an unspecified Israeli vehicle near the border.[41] Unidentified fighters launched rockets and anti-tank missiles towards Kiryat Shmona and Baranit, respectively.[42] IDF Army Radio stated the rocket attacks on Kiryat Shmona caused no

casualties or damage and that the IDF responded with artillery fire toward the location from which the rockets were launched.[43]



**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

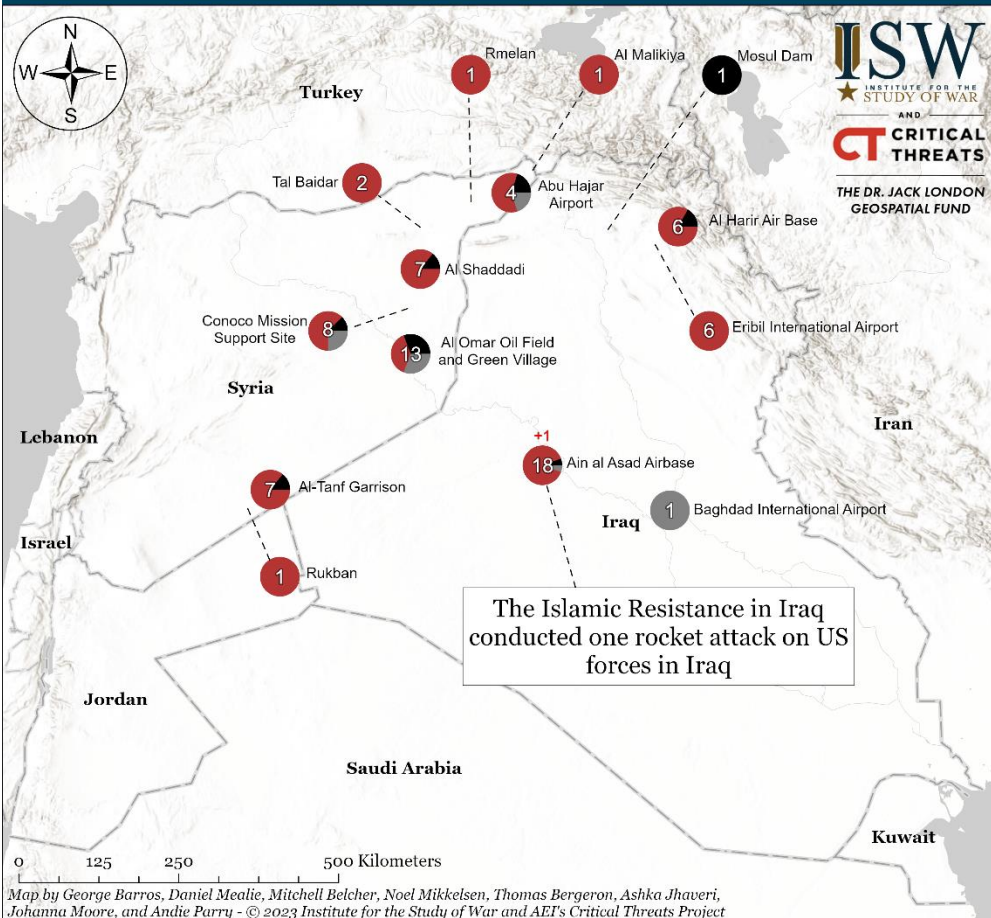
**The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi proxies—claimed one attack on a US base in Iraq.** The group claimed to have fired rockets at Ain al Assad Base in Anbar Province on November 15.[44] Iranian-backed militias have targeted US forces at Ain al Assad Base 18 times since mid-October, making it the most frequently targeted US base in the region.

**A US Navy warship shot down a Houthi drone headed toward it over the Red Sea on November 15.[45]** The *USS Thomas Hudner*, an *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyer, is a different US warship than the one that intercepted the several Houthi drones and cruise missiles fired toward Israel on October 19.[46] Unidentified US officials speaking to Reuters did not specify if the drone was an attack or surveillance model. The drone interception came hours after Houthi military spokesperson Brig. Gen Yahya Sarea claimed responsibility for the November 14 ballistic missile attack on Eilat in southern Israel.[47] Sarea stated that the Houthi army plans to continue attacks on Israel and that will target Israeli ships in the Red Sea. Sarea's statement parallels Houthi movement Leader Abdul Malik al Houthi's threat to target Israeli ships in the Red Sea and the Bab al Mandeb Strait on November 14.[48] The Houthis have the capability to conduct such attacks because the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force has provided the Houthis the means to do so.[49]

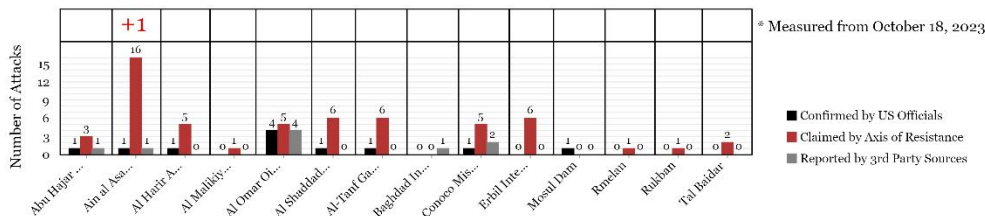
**Likely Iranian-backed militants launched two rockets into the Golan Heights from Syria on November 14.[50]** Local Syrian media reported militants fired rockets from Tell Jumou in Daraa Province at unspecified targets in the Golan Heights and Israeli forces returned mortar fire.[51] This brief exchange of fire in Syria does not mark an escalation of the conflict. Iranian-backed militants or Syrian Arab Army forces have fired projectiles into the Golan Heights from Syria at least 11 times since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.[52]

**Russian forces are trying to distance themselves from Iranian escalation against US forces and Israel in Syria.** Local media Deir ez Zor 24 reported that the Russian general for Deir ez Zor Province ordered local mayors and sheikhs to report all Iranian-backed militia members attempting to attack US forces at Conoco Gas Field.[53] The general extended the surveillance demand to seven towns on the east bank of the Euphrates near US positions. Iranian-backed militants fired at least 15 rockets at Conoco on November 14, likely from sites near the seven towns.[54] The United States has conducted three retaliatory attacks on Iranian-backed militant positions in Deir ez Zor since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.[55] Russia instructed the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) to not co-locate with Iranian-backed militants in southern Syria and not participate in the Israel-Hamas war to avoid Israeli airstrikes, according to UK based anti-regime Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.[56] An Israeli airstrike that targeted an SAA ammunition position in late October was located less than a kilometer away from a Russian military camp in Daraa Province.[57] Israel also conducted airstrikes on the SAA 112th Mechanized Brigade in Daraa Province on November 12 after militants fired projectiles into the Golan Heights the day before.[58]

# Attacks against US Bases in the Middle East as of November 15, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



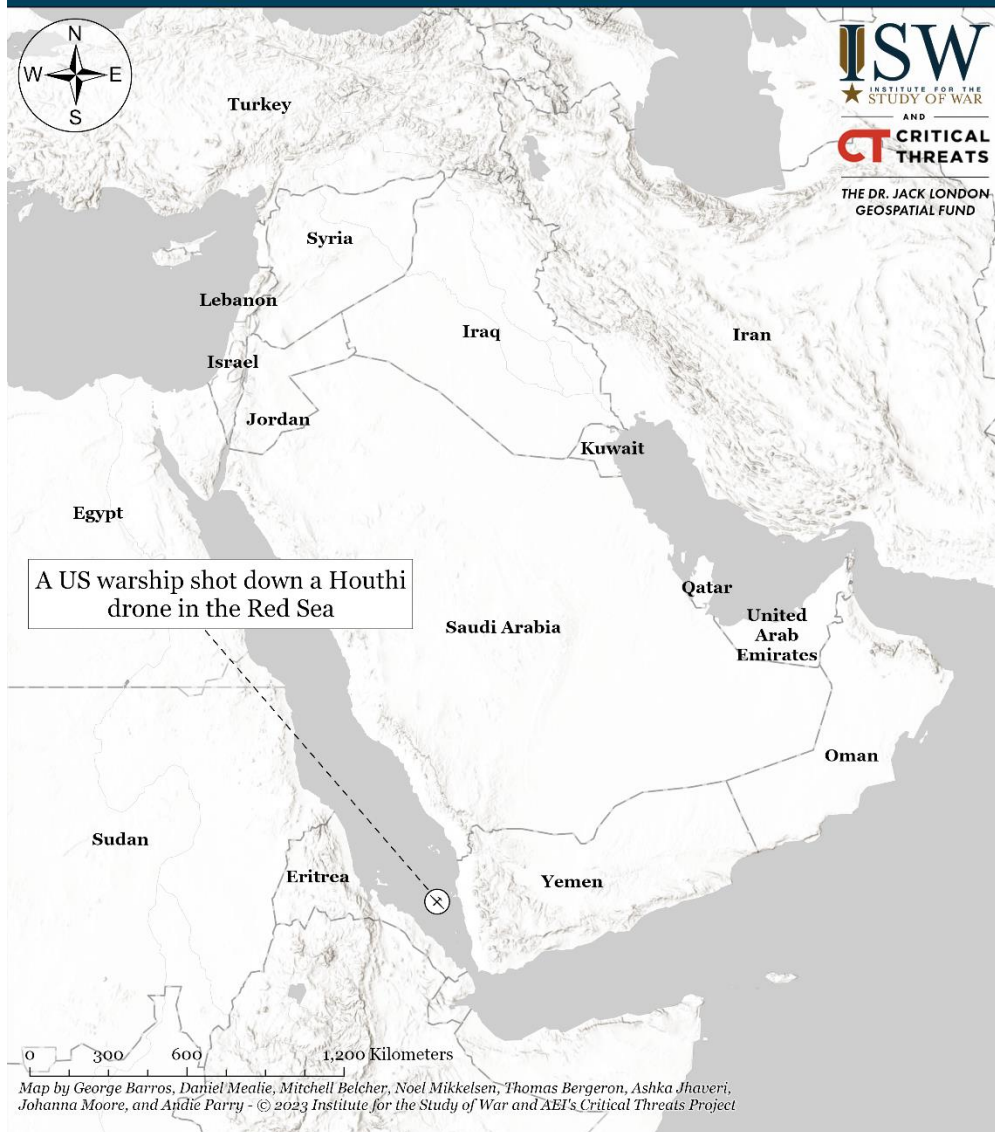
Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project



Note: The numbers placed inside the pie charts denote the total number of attacks. Locations that include an addition to its total number of attacks have red numbers above the bar graph and pie chart to represent new attacks against that location within the past 24 hours.



## Iranian-sponsored Attacks in the Middle East as of November 15, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



**Western media reported that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei complained that Hamas did not warn Iran about its October 7 attack during his meeting with Hamas Political Bureau Head Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on November 5, citing Iranian and Hamas officials.**[59] Reuters also reported that Khamenei warned Haniyeh that Iran would not “enter the war on your behalf” and pressured the Hamas leader to silence his group members calling for Iran and LH to fully join the war against Israel.

- Western media previously reported that American intelligence officials have obtained information suggesting that Iranian officials were surprised by Hamas’ October 7 attack.[60] Western media reported that while Iranian officials were aware that Hamas was planning the attack, they were not aware of the timing or scale.[61] Some Western media has also reported that Iranian officials were directly involved in planning and preparation

for the attack, including training Hamas militants inside Iran in the weeks before October 7.[62]

- It is noteworthy that Iranian officials and media have been conducting two separate information operations, denying any Iranian involvement in or foreknowledge of the attack on the one hand and emphasizing Iranian support for Hamas and the Palestinian resistance on the other, as CTP-ISW previously reported.[63]

**The United States extended its original July sanctions waiver permitting Iraqi payments for Iranian electricity on November 14.[64]**

The sanctions waiver permits the transfer of Iraqi payments for Iranian electricity to restricted bank accounts in third countries for the purchase of non-sanctioned goods. The United States previously issued a similar sanctions waiver in July 2023, permitting Iranian access to roughly 2.7 billion dollars of Iraqi payments, as CTP-ISW reported.[65] Western media reports did not specify whether Iran would now have access to the same or a greater portion of the roughly 10 billion dollars in Iraqi payments being held in escrow accounts inside Iraq.

- IRGC-affiliated media separately recirculated US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller’s statement that Iran would be capable of purchasing only non-sanctioned goods on November 15.[66] The Ebrahim Raisi administration-affiliated outlet IRNA and Iranian Supreme National Security Council-affiliated outlet Nour News Agency recirculated reports about the sanctions waiver on November 14. These outlets additionally argued that the Biden administration should not prevent Iran from accessing its frozen assets in Iraq since Iran played no role in Hamas’ October 7 attack into Israel, as CTP-ISW previously reported.[67]

**The Iraqi Federal Supreme Court issued a ruling to remove Iraqi Parliamentary Speaker Mohammed al Halbousi and Representative Laith al Dulaimi from parliament on November 14.[68]**

The Federal Supreme Court has not published an opinion at the time of publication. Halbousi, an important Sunni politician and the leader of the Taqqadum Movement, claimed that the Federal Supreme Court’s ruling was unconstitutional and was a move by unspecified parties to create political divisions within society.[69] He also announced that the Deputy Prime Minister of Planning Muhammad Ali Tamim, Minister of Industry and Minerals Khaled Battan al Najm, and Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Antiquities Ahmed Fakak al Badrani, all members of the Taqqadum party, would resign in protest and boycott Parliament sessions and State Administration Coalition meetings. All 43 members of the Taqqadum party boycotted the extraordinary parliamentary session held on November 15.[70] Halbousi adjourned parliament “until further notice” after being informed of his removal.[71] Dulaimi’s lawyer claimed that the Federal Supreme Court ruled to remove Halbousi as speaker after reviewing forgery accusations brought against Halbousi by his client Laith al Dulaimi and Representative Basem Khashan.[72] The Coordination Framework expressed its full support for the Iraqi Supreme Court’s decision to remove Halbousi during a meeting held on November 15.[73]

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- [1] [https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp1\\_02.pdf](https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp1_02.pdf)
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- [34] <https://t.me/alredalsrey/462>
- [35] <https://t.me/kataipshohdaaalaqsa/814>; <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/29/palestine-israel-west-bank-armed-groups-huwara-lions-den-jenin-brigade/>
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