

Iran Update



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Information Cutoff: January 17, 2025, 2:00 pm ET

The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) publish the Iran Update, which provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests.

Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations, and [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of the ongoing opposition offensive in Syria. These maps are updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

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.

The Israeli security cabinet approved the Israel-Hamas ceasefire-hostage deal on January 17.^[1] Israel's full cabinet began deliberating on the deal on January 17 but has not released a decision on it as of the time of this writing. The full cabinet will very likely approve the deal, given that the security cabinet recommended the deal's approval.^[2] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the cabinet that the United States promised to support Israel resuming the war in the Gaza Strip if the second phase of ceasefire negotiations fail or Israel's security demands are not met, according to a Netanyahu aide speaking to *Axios* on January 17.^[3]

The Prime Minister's office said that the ceasefire and the release of Israeli hostages should start at 0900 ET on January 19.^[4] The Israeli government reportedly believes that most of the 33 hostages that Hamas will release in the first phase of the deal are alive, but Hamas has not confirmed a list of living and dead hostages.^[5] An Israeli official told *Axios* on January 17 that Israel will not release the list of the Palestinian prisoners it will release under the deal until Hamas shares this information.^[6] Israeli media correspondents reported on January 17 that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) created three forward reception points on the border of the Gaza Strip to receive the hostages.^[7] The hostages will also receive immediate support from the IDF, doctors, and mental health professionals upon their release.

Israeli officials and media detailed the IDF's planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip under the ceasefire deal on January 17.^[8] Israeli media correspondents confirmed that the IDF 99th Division will gradually withdraw from the Netzarim Corridor during the ceasefire's first phase,

while the IDF 162nd Division will secure the area north of the Gaza Strip. The 99th Division deployed to the central Gaza Strip in early November 2024 to replace the 252nd Division.[9] The 162nd Division deployed to the northern Gaza Strip in early October 2024.[10] The media correspondents also confirmed that the IDF 143rd Division will secure the southern Gaza Strip and gradually withdraw from the Philadelphi Corridor.[11] A senior Israeli official confirmed on January 16 that the IDF will remain in the Philidelphi Corridor beyond the first phase of the agreement until Israel achieves its war objectives.[12]

An Israeli official told *Axios* that Qatari and Egyptian officials will ensure no heavy weaponry enter the area.[13] An Israeli Army Radio correspondent contradicted the *Axios* reporting and claimed on January 17 that an American security company would inspect civilians returning to the northern Gaza Strip in vehicles.[14] Displaced Gazans will begin to return to the northern Gaza Strip during the first phase of the deal.[15]

Both Iranian-backed Iraqi militias and the Houthi movement ceased military operations against Israel after the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, which underscores that the October 7 War was a regional conflict between Iran and its Axis of Resistance and Israel. All elements of the Iranian-backed Axis of Resistance, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria, and the Houthi movement, began their offensive in support of Hamas against Israel's response to Hamas's October 7 attack.[16] The opening attacks by the Houthis, the Iranian-backed Iraqi militias, and Hezbollah were de-facto declarations of war against Israel that escalated and regionalized the war. Hezbollah only made a separate peace with Israel after the IDF compelled it to do so by defeating Hezbollah militarily.

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias officially suspended attacks against Israel after the ceasefire. Iranian-backed Iraqi attacks against Israel stopped in November 2024, following Israeli threats. Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba Secretary-General Akram al Kaabi announced the suspension of Iraqi militia attacks against Israel on January 15 and warned that the militias will react harshly to any Israeli "foolishness." [17] Kataib Sarkhat al Quds similarly threatened that Iraqi militias would respond "forcefully" to any Israeli actions against Palestinian rights.[18] Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba and Kataib Sarkhat al Quds are part of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias.[19] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq consistently launched drone strikes that targeted Israel between February to November 2024.[20] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq dramatically increased its rate of attacks against Israel in September and October 2024.[21] This attack increase spurred the United States and Israel to warn the Iraqi government in early November 2024 that the IDF would potentially attack targets in Iraq if Iranian-backed Iraqi militias continued to attack Israel.[22] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has not claimed any attacks since November 24 at the time of this writing.[23]

The Houthis also paused their campaign against Israel, which will enable the Houthis to institutionalize lessons learned and replenish arms stockpiles as needed. The Houthis have continuously launched drone and missile attacks targeting Israeli territory, international shipping, and US military vessels in the Red Sea since October 2023.[24] The Houthis have not conducted attacks on international vessels in the Red Sea since November 2024, however.[25] A pause—however short—will provide the Houthis time to institutionalize lessons learned and disseminate that guidance throughout

their force. Iran has almost certainly supplied the Houthis weapons throughout the campaign, but it is unclear to what extent they were able to resupply the Houthis during the 14-month campaign.[26]

The Houthis framed their ceasefire pause as conditional and implied that the ceasefire is only a pause in the wider war that the Houthis believe will end in the destruction of the Israeli state. The Houthi Supreme Leader Abdulmalik al Houthi vowed on January 16 to halt attacks targeting Israel if the ceasefire is upheld.[27] Abdulmalik provided significant caveats to this pause, however. The Houthi supreme leader said that “after this round, the matter is not over...[the Houthis] are with [the Palestinian people]...and [the Houthis] will always be with [the Palestinian people] until the liberation of [all] of Palestine.”[28] The Houthis can resume attacks on Israel and against international shipping to “blockade” Israel at any time and for any reason that the movement’s leadership chooses.

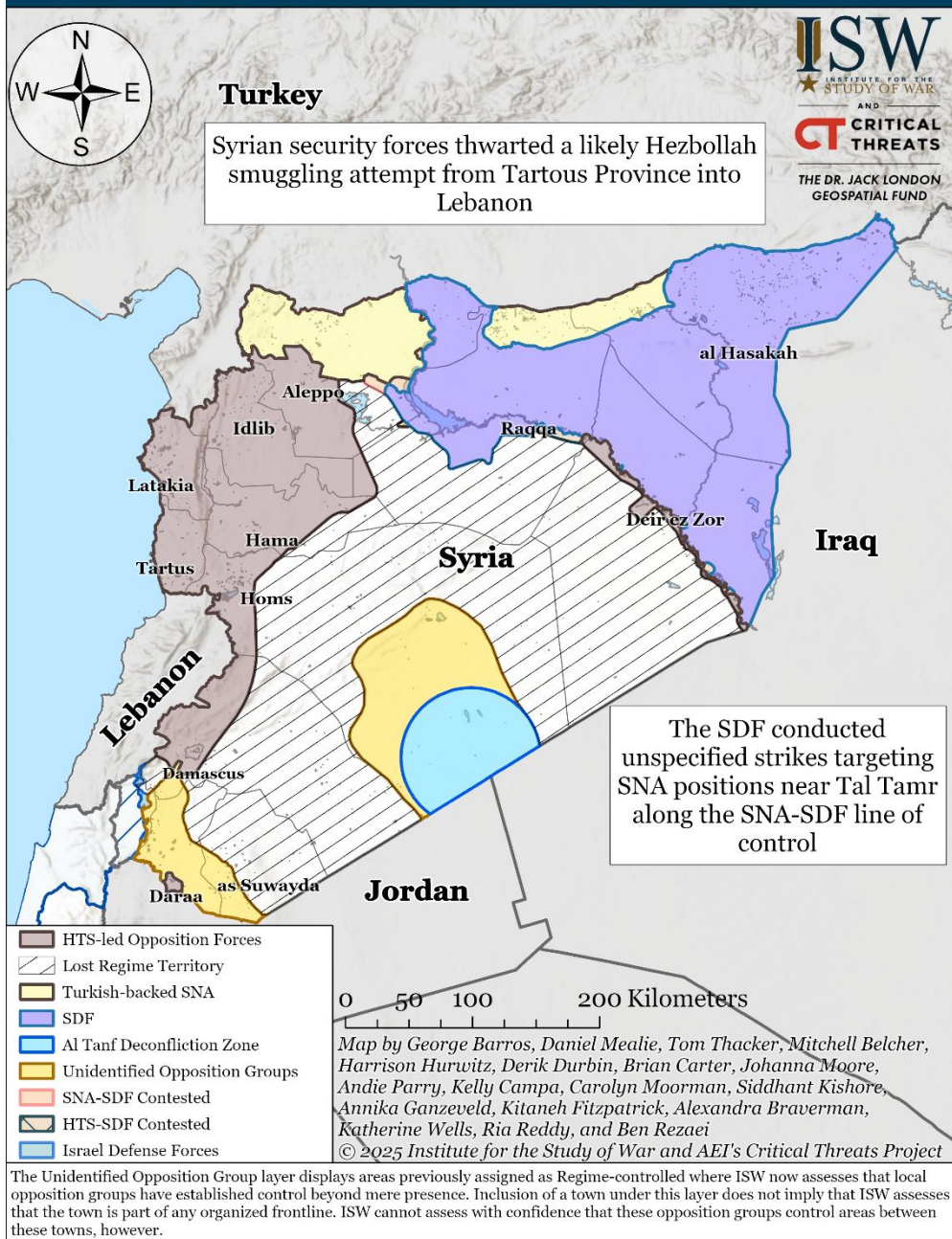
The Houthis said that they would respond to any attacks against Houthi targets by the United States or Israel. Abdulmalik also stated that the Houthis will increase their attacks targeting Israel should Israel or the United States try to “distance” Yemen from its “jihadist orientation.” Abdulmalik added that the Houthis will continue to develop their military capabilities. The Houthi Military Spokesperson Yahya Sarea also confirmed the Houthis’ “constant readiness to take comprehensive action to confront any criminal Israeli aggressive escalation, whether in these days or beyond,” during a mass Houthi demonstration in Sanaa on January 17.[29]

Turkey continues to pressure the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to rapidly disarm and integrate into the HTS-led interim Syrian government. Turkish President Recep Erdogan stated that Kurdish armed groups in northern Syria must choose to either lay down their arms peacefully or “be forced to do so,” presumably by Turkey and its proxies.[30] Turkey has threatened to launch a full-scale military operation against the SDF since December 2024 as part of an effort to coerce the SDF to disarm.[31] Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) has supported the Turkish effort. Turkey has continued to encourage negotiations between the SDF and the HTS-led interim government while Turkish and Turkish-backed forces continue to prepare for an offensive.[32]

The Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) representative to the Iraqi Kurdistan Region Hoshang Darwish stated that the Kurdish National Congress in Syria will establish a “consensus” over Kurdish demands in Syria.[33] Darwish argued that the Iraqi Kurdistan Region has a positive relationship with Turkey and that the Iraqi Kurdistan Region can address Ankara’s concerns about armed Kurdish groups in Syria. Darwish’s statement is consistent with CTP-ISW’s observation that the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), one of two major parties in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and the ruling party under the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), appeared to be pressuring the SDF to avoid a full-scale war with Turkey and the SNA.[34] The KDP has steadily improved its relationship with Turkey, primarily due to the KDP’s hostility to the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK).[35]

Reported Control of Terrain in Syria

As of January 17, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty in Moscow on January 17 to deepen bilateral economic, political, and security ties.[36] The agreement does not represent a significant shift in Russo-Iranian relations and uses very similar language to Iran and Russia's 2001 agreement.[37] The new Iran-Russia agreement is largely a framework agreement, intended to outline terms for more detailed discussions and agreements on specifics in the future. Iran frequently pursues these vague framework agreements to establish strategic partnerships as it struggles to secure binding

commitments with other nations. Such framework agreements have historically failed to materialize into significant outcomes for Iran, however.

The Iran-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement notably lacks a mutual defense clause.[38] The agreement outlines bilateral defense and security cooperation, including joint military exercises and operations, personnel training, port visits by military vessels, the exchange of military officers, and intelligence sharing.[39] The agreement, consistent with the 2001 agreement, requires both parties to refrain from aiding any aggressor that targets the other and to prevent their territory from being used to support actions that threaten the stability and territorial integrity of the other. The agreement does not include any collective security clause, however. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi stated that the agreement is “not a military alliance.”[40] Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalili similarly told Russian state media that the agreement differs from Russia's agreements with North Korea and Belarus which include collective defense provisions.[41]

The lack of a mutual defense clause in the Iran-Russia agreement indicates that Iran is unlikely to provide military personnel to support Russia's war in Ukraine. Russia similarly likely does not have the military and defense industrial capacity to support any significant military operations apart from its war in Ukraine.[42] Russia's willingness to offer security guarantees to North Korea suggests North Korea currently holds greater relative importance to Russia than Iran does, as North Korea has supplied soldiers to Russia while Iran likely neither wants to nor can provide such support.

The Iran-Russia agreement also focuses on economic, energy, and nuclear cooperation. The agreement emphasizes key transportation initiatives, including the completion of the International North-South Transport Corridor.[43] The agreement calls for opposing “unilateral coercive measures”—almost certainly referring to sanctions—and limiting their impact on economic relations. The agreement also expands energy cooperation in the oil and gas sectors.[44] Putin stated that Russian gas deliveries to Iran would start at 2 billion cubic meters per year but could reach 55 billion cubic meters annually.[45] The energy swaps would come amid one of Iran's worst energy shortages.[46] The agreement also covers joint “peaceful” atomic energy projects, including the construction of nuclear energy facilities.[47] Russia and Iran signed a joint nuclear cooperation agreement in 2014 to construct two new nuclear reactors at Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant in Iran.

Key Takeaways:

- **Gaza Strip Ceasefire:** The Prime Minister's office said that the ceasefire and the release of Israeli hostages should start at 0900 ET on January 19. All three IDF divisions currently in the Strip will gradually withdraw, with the 99th Division (currently in the Netzarim Corridor) departing first.
- **Regional Implications of Gaza Ceasefire:** Both Iranian-backed Iraqi militias and the Houthi movement ceased military operations against Israel after the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, which underscores that the October 7 War was a regional conflict between Iran and its Axis of Resistance and Israel. The opening attacks by the Houthis, the Iranian-backed Iraqi militias, and Hezbollah were de-facto declarations of war against Israel that escalated and regionalized the war. Hezbollah only made separate peace with Israel after the IDF compelled it to do so by defeating Hezbollah militarily.

- **Houthis React to Gaza Ceasefire:** The Houthis also paused their campaign against Israel, which will enable the Houthis to institutionalize lessons learned and replenish arms stockpiles as needed. The Houthis framed their ceasefire pause as conditional and implied that the ceasefire is only a pause in the wider war that the Houthis believe will end in the destruction of the Israeli state.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** Turkey continues to pressure the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to rapidly disarm and integrate into the HTS-led interim Syrian government. Turkish President Recep Erdogan stated that Kurdish armed groups in northern Syria must choose to either lay down their arms peacefully or “be forced to do so,” presumably by Turkey and its proxies.
- **Russo-Iranian Agreement:** The Iran-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement signed on January 17 notably lacks a mutual defense clause. The agreement outlines bilateral defense and security cooperation, including joint military exercises and operations, personnel training, port visits by military vessels, the exchange of military officers, and intelligence sharing.

Syria

Axis of Resistance objectives:

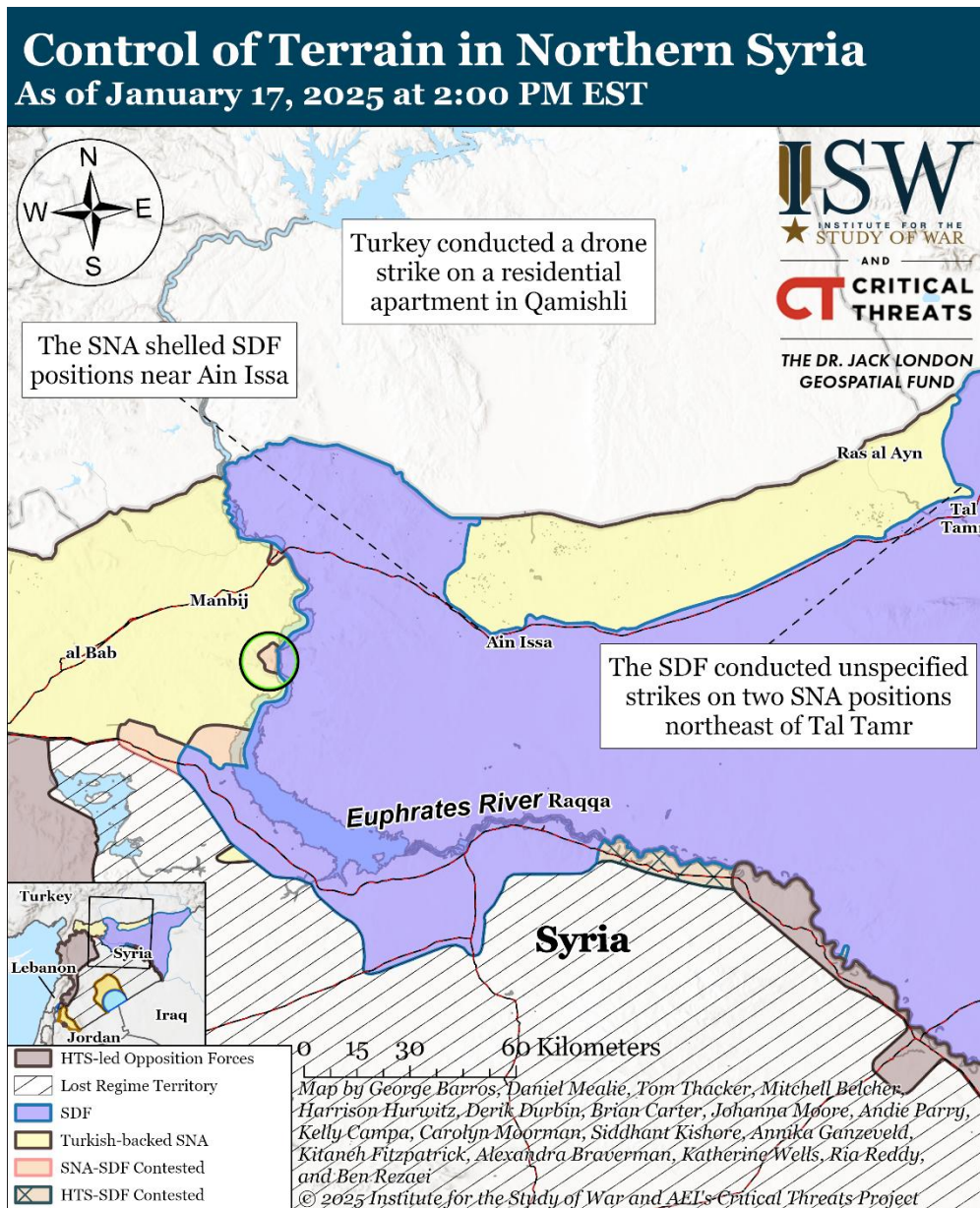
- Reestablish ground lines of communication through Syria to Lebanon
- Reestablish Iranian influence in Syria

The SDF targeted SNA positions near Tel Tamr along the SDF-SNA line of control on December 16 and 17. The SDF reported that its forces struck the SNA Bab al Faraj and Abdul Hay positions in Zarkan, northeast of Tel Tamr.[48] The SNA-SDF line of control delineates the SNA-controlled Peace Spring enclave between Ain Issa and Tal Tamr and north of the M4 highway from SDF-controlled territory in northeastern Syria. SNA forces have reportedly deployed reinforcements and mobilized along the SNA-SDF line of control near Tal Tamr, which suggests that the SNA is preparing to launch a potential offensive against the SDF from the east.[49]

Turkey and the SNA continued to target SDF positions near the M4 highway along the SNA-SDF line of control possibly to interdict SDF reinforcements and resupply from the east to the Qara Qozak Bridge as Turkey and the SNA attempt to reduce the bridgehead.[50] CTP-ISW previously reported that Turkey and the SNA appear to be preparing for an offensive into SDF-controlled territory in Syria.[51] CTP-ISW noted that this could launch a three-pronged assault to collapse SDF defenses along the eastern bank of the Euphrates. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said on January 7 that Turkey would conduct a “military operation” against the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) in Syria if the YPG does not disband and integrate into the new Syrian Defense Ministry.[52] Turkey frequently conflates the YPG with the SDF and uses the YPG to refer to the entire SDF.

Unspecified fighters have detonated explosive devices in two separate attacks in SNA-controlled territory since January 16.[53] Unknown fighters detonated an unspecified explosive device on the Jarablus-Manbij road, east of Aleppo, on January 16.[54] Unidentified fighters also

detonated a car bomb on al Rabita Street in Manbij city, east of Aleppo, on January 17.[55] The car bomb injured at least three individuals.[56] There have been four other car bombs or VBIEDs detonated in SNA-controlled territory since December 24.[57]



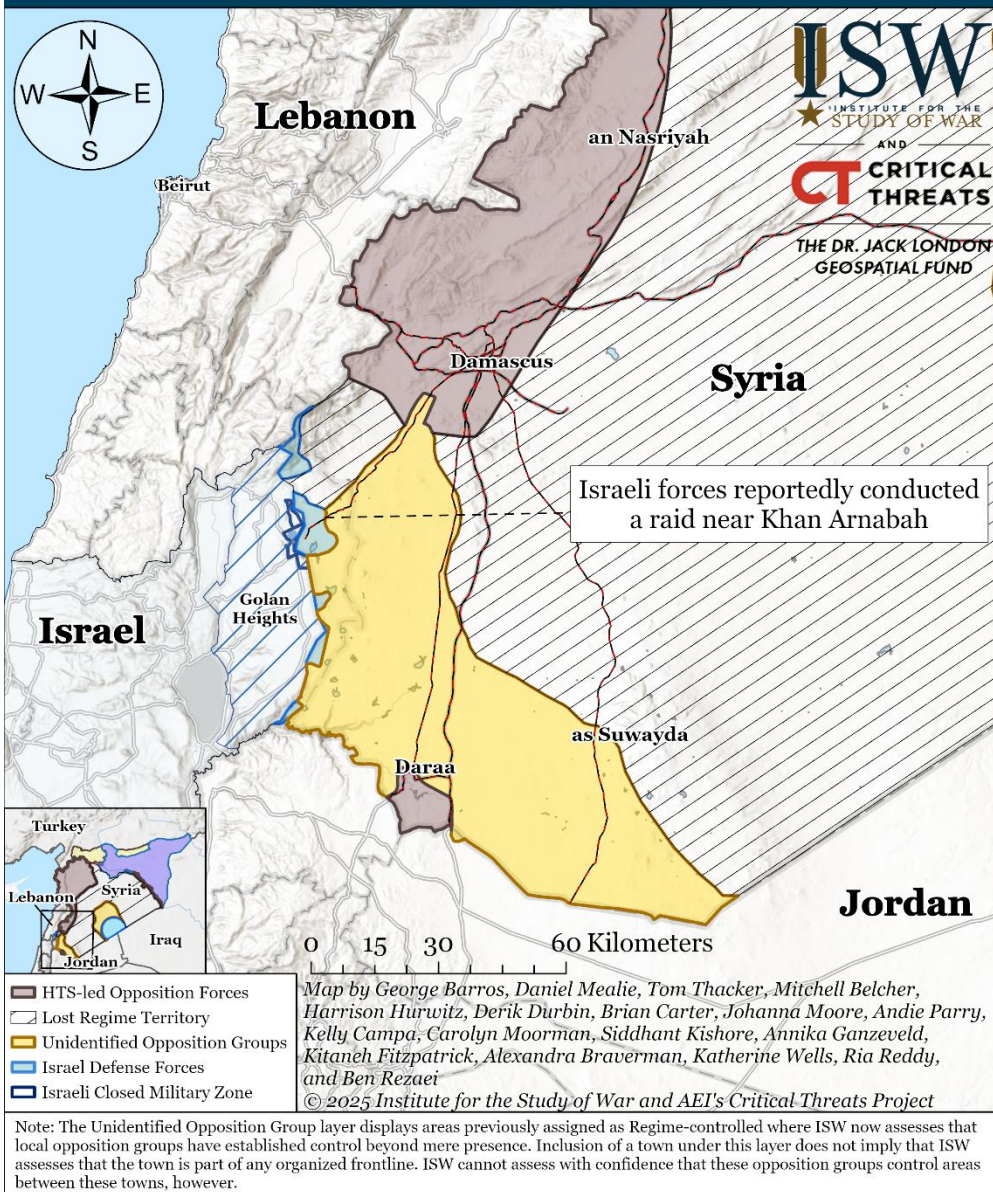
US Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General Michael Kurilla met with US forces and partners participating in the Defeat ISIS campaign in Syria on January 16.[58] Kurilla visited the al Hol IDP camp in Hasakah Province and emphasized CENTCOM’s focus on supporting the repatriation of residents of al Hol and al Roj camps. Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve Commander Major General Kevin Leahy and Combined Special Operations Joint Task Force-Levant Commander Brigadier General Michael Brooks accompanied Kurilla during his Syria visit. Kurilla’s visit to Syria was his final stop in a regional tour.

Unspecified actors attempted to smuggle weapons into Lebanon from Tartous Province on December 17, likely to resupply Hezbollah. HTS-led security forces interdicted the shipment.[59] The Public Security Directorate in Tartous announced that security forces successfully thwarted an attempt to smuggle at least three Iranian-made Shahed 101 drones, numerous machine guns and Kalashnikov rifles, and one multiple grenade launcher through an unofficial border crossing from Tartous into Lebanon.[60] Hezbollah is the likely recipient of the shipment, given the Iranian drones, but the Lebanon-Syria border has long been a conduit for smuggling.[61] The Public Security Directorate did not disclose the identity of the smugglers, however. It remains unclear if they were affiliated with Hezbollah or remaining Iranian-supported networks in the region, which are unlikely to have completely collapsed following the fall of the Assad regime. Iran and Hezbollah do not need to rely on Hezbollah or pro-Iranian personnel to smuggle these weapons, though Hezbollah or pro-Iran militiamen would be the most trustworthy and responsive to direction. Local Syrian media and some security analysts have attributed recent clashes along the border in Syria to Hezbollah fighters, suggesting that Hezbollah or pro-Hezbollah remnants remain in Syria.[62] It is notable that security forces thwarted this smuggling attempt in Tartous. HTS-led security forces have contended with several small pockets of locally organized fighter cells in coastal Syria since HTS took control over the area.[63]

The IDF continued operations in the demilitarized zone between the Golan Heights and Syria on January 17. Local Syria media posted a video of an IDF convoy driving near Mantara Dam.[64] Syrian media also stated that the IDF conducted a raid in Qaws al Nabaa, on the outskirts of Khan Arnabah, and later withdrew to Quneitra.[65] HTS leader and de-facto Syrian head of state Ahmed al Shara stated on January 16 that Israeli forces must return to the 1974 disengagement line in the Golan Heights and that UN forces should deploy to the buffer zone.[66]

Opposition Advances in Southwest Syria

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An International Criminal Court delegation met with HTS leader and de-facto Syrian head of state Ahmed al Shara and Syrian Interim Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani in Damascus on January 17.[67] Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court Karim Khan led the delegation.

Iraq

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Strengthen Iranian and Axis of Resistance influence over the Iraqi state and society
- Harden the Iraqi government against internal dissent

Iraqi National Wisdom Movement head Ammar al Hakim visited Ninewa Province in northern Iraq on January 16.[68] Hakim is a Shia politician who is now part of the Shia Coordination Framework, but who has previously attempted to support former Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi and previously headed the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq.[69] Hakim discussed the "social and security" situation in Ninewa Province with Popular Mobilization Forces Ninewa Operations Commander Khadir al Matrohi.[70] Matrohi is affiliated with the Badr Organization.[71] Hakim separately emphasized the importance of unity and cohesion during a meeting with tribal leaders, including the leader of the Shammari tribe, in Rabia, Ninewa Province.[72] The Shammari tribe is a Sunni tribe that resides in northwestern Iraq and northeastern Syria. Hakim called for "fortifying [Iraq's] internal front" and preserving "Iraqi diversity within the framework of one Iraqi nation." [73] Hakim's meeting with tribal leaders comes after the Shammari tribe leader praised Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) leader Masoud Barzani and emphasized the need for Arab-Kurdish unity in a statement on January 8, suggesting that the Shammari tribe is aligned with the KDP.[74] CTP-ISW previously assessed that some Iraqi Sunni and Kurdish politicians appear to be trying to build an alliance ahead of the October 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections and that such an alliance would challenge Iranian-backed Shia parties.[75]

The newly-formed United Sunni Leadership Coalition reiterated on January 16 its demand that the Mohammad Shia al Sudani administration implement the "political agreement paper" in order to ensure the coalition's continued "partnership in the government coalition."[76] The Iranian-backed Shia Coordination Framework and some Sunni and Kurdish political parties signed the "political agreement paper" in 2022, enabling the formation of the Sudani administration.[77] The agreement includes a key Sunni demand to implement the General Amnesty Law, which would grant amnesty to many Iraqis, including some who were arrested under Article 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Law.[78] Some Sunni political parties boycotted parliament on January 15, ostensibly because Parliament Speaker Mahmoud Mashhadani and the two deputy speakers did not include the General Amnesty Law on parliament's agenda.[79] CTP-ISW assessed that these parties may have also sought to block the passage of the National Intelligence Service Law, which was also on the agenda.[80] A member of the Parliamentary Defense and Security Committee told Iraqi media that the National Intelligence Service Law would provide greater "legal cover" to the Iraqi National Intelligence Service, which is currently led by an Iranian-backed Badr Organization-affiliated director.[81] The Iraqi parliament is set to reconvene and vote on the National Intelligence Service Law, among other bills, on January 19.[82]

An unspecified source close to Iranian-backed Iraqi militias emphasized on January 17 that the militias will not give in to external pressure to dissolve themselves.[83] The source told Iraqi media that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias will not dissolve so long as US forces remain in Iraq. The source added that US pressure to dissolve Iranian-backed Iraqi militias "will not achieve anything"

and that discussions about dissolving the militias “do not reflect reality.”[84] These comments were likely in response to the Iraqi foreign affairs minister’s interview with Reuters on January 16 in which he stated that the Iraqi federal government is attempting to convince Iranian-backed Iraqi militias to either surrender their weapons or join the official Iraqi security apparatus.[85]

Arabian Peninsula

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Harden the Houthi regime against internal dissent in Houthi-controlled areas
- Destroy the anti-Houthi opposition in order to control all of Yemen
- Erode Israeli will to continue the war in the Gaza Strip

Nothing significant to report.

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Axis of Resistance objectives:

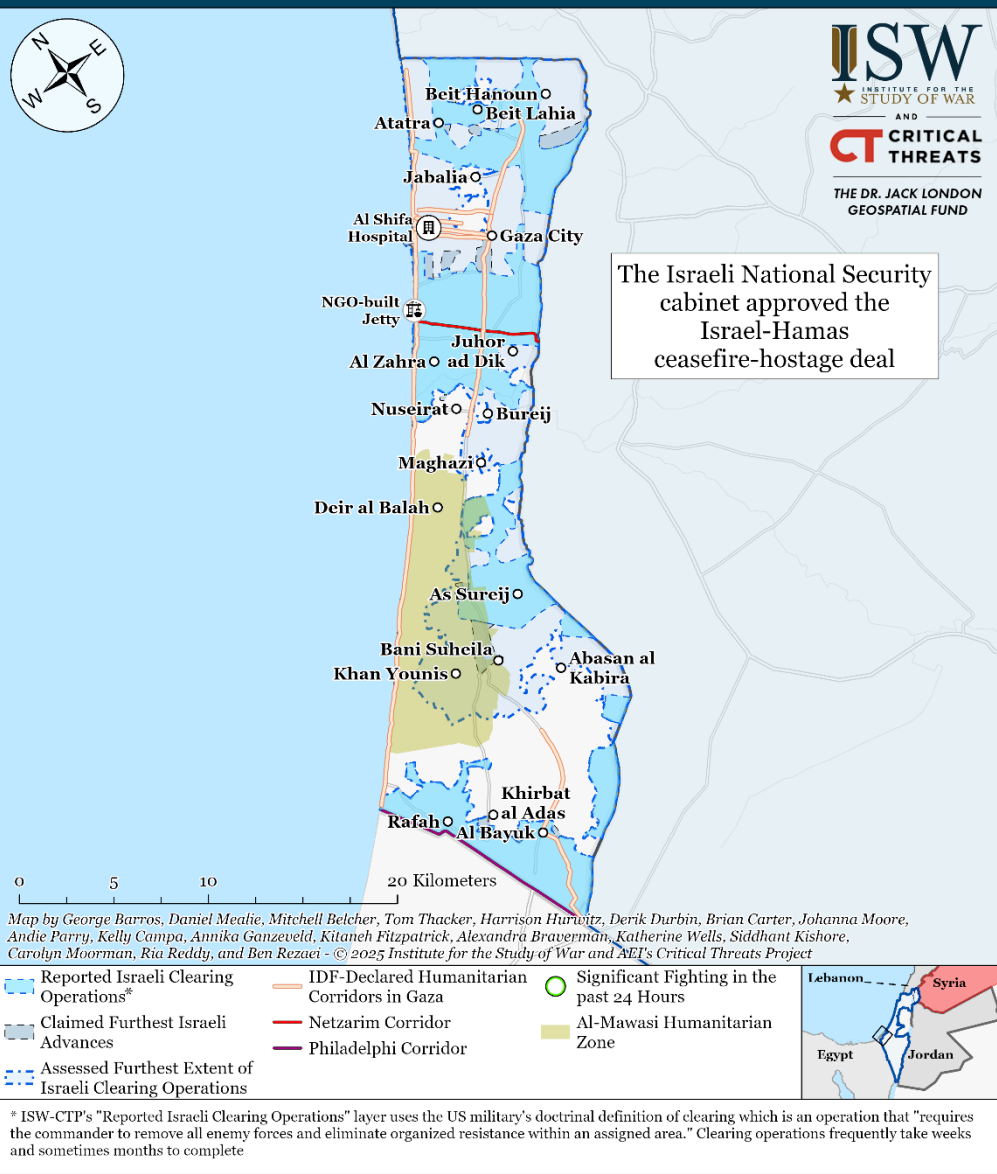
- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to sustain clearing operations in the Gaza Strip
- Reestablish Hamas as the governing authority in the Gaza Strip
- Rebuild and reestablish Hezbollah in southern Lebanon
- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

The Gaza Strip

Commercially available satellite imagery showed that the IDF continued clearing operations in Jabalia in recent days.

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

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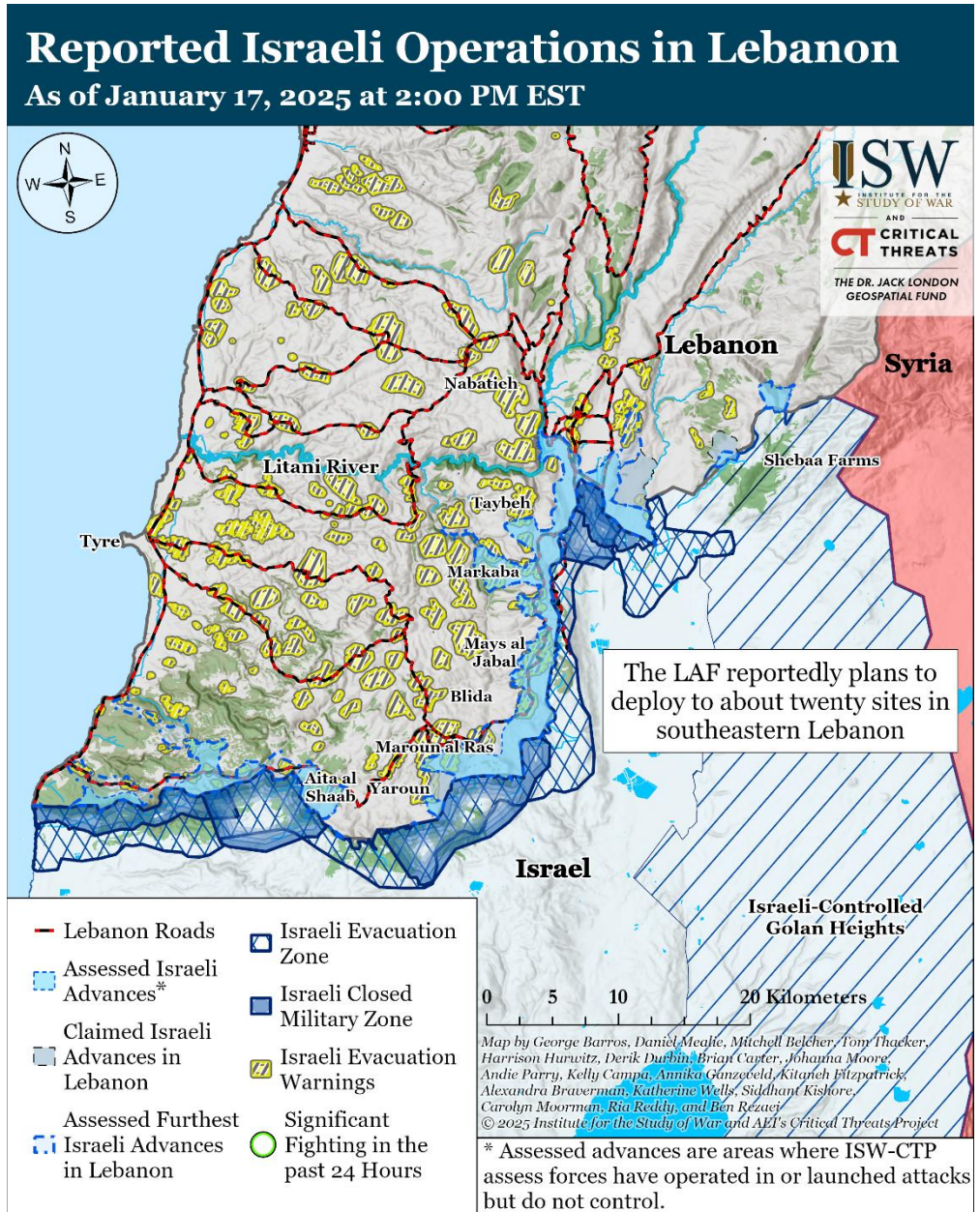


Lebanon

Lebanese media reported on December 17 that the IDF moved from Maroun al Ras towards the general direction of Bint Jbeil in southeastern Lebanon.[86] The IDF reportedly detonated explosives in Mays al Jabal multiple times since entering the area.[87] Hezbollah-affiliated and Lebanese media reported on January 15 that the IDF moved toward multiple towns in southern Lebanon where the IDF had previously operated in or near, including Maroun al Ras.[88]

Lebanese media reported that the IDF detonated explosives multiple times in Aita al Shaab, southwestern Lebanon, since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on December 16.[89]

Lebanese media reported on January 17 that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) is preparing to deploy to approximately twenty sites in southeastern Lebanon.[90] LAF deployments have primarily occurred in southwestern Lebanon due to ongoing Israeli ground operations in southeastern Lebanon.[91] LAF forces recently deployed to Khiam, southeastern Lebanon, on December 11.[92]



United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres visited UNIFIL sites in southern Lebanon on January 17.[93] Guterres reported that UN peacekeepers in Lebanon have identified over 100 weapons depots likely belonging to Hezbollah since the ceasefire's implementation on November 27, 2024.[94] Guterres also stated that IDF activity in UNIFIL's area of operations and Lebanese territory must stop during his visit to UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura, southwestern Lebanon.[95]

French President Emmanuel Macron and Lebanese President Joseph Aoun discussed the ongoing implementation of the ceasefire agreement, support for the LAF, and the progress of the Lebanese government following recent Aoun's election in Beirut on January 17.[96] Macron expressed the need for a total Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and weapons to be restricted to the LAF during his meeting with Aoun.[97]

West Bank

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) stated on January 16 that militia fighters will "continue to resist" Israeli forces in the West Bank, despite a negotiated Hamas-Israel ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.[98] PIJ Tulkarm Battalion and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades targeted Israeli forces and vehicles in Tulkarm and Nablus with improvised explosive devices (IED) and small arms on January 16 and 17.[99]

Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

Iran seeks to deepen ties with Ethiopia as part of Iran's efforts to build relations with states in and around the Middle East to mitigate the impact of international sanctions on the Iranian economy.[100] Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali and the Ethiopian House of Peoples Representatives Speaker Tadesse Chafo in Addis Ababa on January 17.[101] Ghalibaf stressed the need to revive the joint Iranian-Ethiopia economic committee, which has not met for 10 years, and to expand cooperation in mining, agriculture, energy, knowledge-based industries, and artificial intelligence. Ghalibaf suggested that these ties could turn Addis Ababa into a "transport hub." Ahmed Ali agreed with Ghalibaf and commented on Iran's useful and "good technologies." Ghalibaf separately encouraged Chafo to establish an Ethiopian Embassy in Tehran.[102] Ghalibaf also discussed developing solutions for Iranian trade transportation issues with African states through BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, during a meeting with several businessmen and traders based in Ethiopia.[103] Ghalibaf separately emphasized Iran's support for all sects of Muslims in a meeting with Ethiopia's Supreme Council Speaker Sheikh Ibrahim Tufa.[104] Iran-Ethiopia Parliamentary Friendship Group Maounchehr Mottaki, Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Deputy Minister Vahid Jalazadeh, and MPs Alia Zamani Kiasari and Ali Sangdevini accompanied Ghalibaf on his trip to Addis Ababa.[105]

The Sistan and Baluchistan Province Border Guard Command conducted a naval exercise in Chabahar on January 17.[106] The exercise took place in the Gulf of Oman and aimed to maintain operational readiness and enhance the combat capability of Iranian security forces. Iranian Law Enforcement Commander Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Radan emphasized that Iranian security forces are stronger than ever and will "swiftly neutralize" any threats to Sistan and Baluchistan Province.[107]

Iranian hardliners criticized Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian after he expressed openness to negotiations with the United States in an interview with NBC News on January 15. Pezeshkian stated in the interview that Iran would be willing to engage in direct nuclear talks with the United States if Iran got "assurances" that the United States would maintain its commitments.[108] Tehran interim Friday Prayer Leader Kazem Sedighi criticized "those advocating

for compromise with the United States” and stated that such efforts “disregard past sacrifices” and “the blood of martyrs.”[109] Iranian Expediency Discernment Council member and former secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Saeed Jalili criticized efforts to portray the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as a success and argued that it was a failed policy.[110] Jalili added that Iran managed to sell oil and purchase vaccines under former Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi despite FATF restrictions and noted that US officials have admitted the failure of the “maximum pressure” policy.[111] Iranian hardliners remain opposed to negotiations with the West, particularly the United States, and some have urged Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to rescind his 2003 fatwa that prohibits the production and use of nuclear weapons.[112]

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.

CTP-ISW defines the “Axis of Resistance” as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually expelling American influence from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.

POWERED BY:



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[1] <https://www.axios.com/2025/01/17/israeli-cabinet-approves-hostage-ceasefire-deal>

[2] <https://x.com/BarakRavid/status/1880239123317027175>

[3] <https://www.axios.com/2025/01/17/israeli-cabinet-approves-hostage-ceasefire-deal>

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[5] <https://www.axios.com/2025/01/17/gaza-israel-ceasefire-hostage-deal-signed> ;
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- [10] <https://x.com/idfonline/status/1842805439525691762>
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