

Iran Update, March 25, 2024

Andie Parry, Annika Ganzeveld, Peter Mills, Kathryn Tyson, Amin Soltani, Ashka Jhaveri, and Brian Carter

Information Cutoff: 2:00pm ET

Shin Bet announced on March 25 that the IDF seized a “significant amount of advanced arms from Iran” that Iran had smuggled into the West Bank to support Palestinian militia attacks targeting Israel.[1] The captured arms included 83 small arms, five anti-tank mines, four grenade launchers, 15 RPGs, and 25 kilograms of plastic explosives.[2] Shin Bet also said that a Fatah official based in Lebanon and affiliated with Lebanese Hezbollah and the IRGC assisted the Iranian effort to smuggle arms into the West Bank, but Shin Bet did not provide further details.[3] Shin Bet added that the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force organized the effort to smuggle Iranian weapons into the West Bank, which is consistent with previous Western reporting.[4] The *Wall Street Journal* reported in October 2023 that Iran is smuggling weapons from Syria through Jordan into the West Bank, citing multiple Jordanian security officials.[5] Other unspecified regional officials told the *Journal* in October 2023 that the “vast majority” of weapons going through Jordan “appear[ed] destined for the West Bank.”[6]

Key Takeaways:

- **West Bank:** Shin Bet announced that the IDF seized a “significant amount of advanced arms from Iran” that Iran had smuggled into the West Bank to support Palestinian militia attacks targeting Israel.
- **Northern Gaza Strip:** A small number of Palestinian fighters have likely infiltrated Beit Hanoun in the northeastern Gaza Strip.
- **Southern Gaza Strip:** The IDF continued a second round of clearing operations in al Amal neighborhood, western Khan Younis.
- **Political Developments:** The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed a resolution calling for “an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan respected by all parties” in the Gaza Strip.
- **Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights:** Lebanese Hezbollah conducted at least nine attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel.
- **Syria:** Israel likely conducted an airstrike targeting an Iranian-backed militia- and Syrian Arab Army (SAA)-controlled military site near Damascus, Syria.
- **Iran:** The Iranian regime is continuing to exploit the Israel-Hamas war to try to politically isolate Israel in the Middle East. IRGC-affiliated media published images of Iranian protesters in Tehran on March 24 who were calling on Turkey to stop food and oil exports to Israel.
- **Yemen:** The Houthi movement threatened to attack oil installations in Saudi Arabia if Saudi Arabia allowed the United States to use Saudi airspace to strike the Houthis, which is probably a Houthi attempt to pressure Saudi Arabia into discouraging US airstrikes targeting Houthi military assets in Yemen.

Israel-Hamas War as of March 25, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip during Ramadan

Lebanese Hezbollah conducted at least nine attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel

The IDF seized a “significant amount of advanced arms from Iran” that Iran smuggled from Syria into the West Bank to facilitate Palestinian militia attacks targeting Israel

The Houthi movement threatened to attack oil installations in Saudi Arabia if Saudi Arabia allowed the United States to use Saudi airspace to strike the Houthis



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- Israel
- Gaza Strip and West Bank
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Syria
- Golan Heights

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.

A small number of Palestinian fighters have likely infiltrated Beit Hanoun in the northeastern Gaza Strip. The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, which is the self-proclaimed military wing of Fatah and aligned with Hamas in the war, reported that its fighters conducted three attacks targeting Israeli forces between March 22 and 24.[7] Hamas fighters targeted Israeli armor with rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) northeast of Beit Hanoun on March 24.[8] There are at least seven Palestinian militias, including Hamas, contesting Israeli operations in other areas of the northern Gaza Strip. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) acknowledged on March 24 that its forces are operating near Beit Hanoun, noting that the IDF Air Force conducted an airstrike on a target in Beit Hanoun that "posed a threat to the forces operating in the area." [9] Israeli forces have conducted multi-week operations in other areas of the northern Gaza Strip to reclear those areas of Palestinian fighters and military infrastructure.

Israeli forces continued operations in and around al Shifa Hospital, Gaza City, on March 25. An IDF spokesperson said that the Israeli forces engaged Palestinian fighters in the hospital.[10] Hagari said that Israeli forces have killed 170 Palestinian fighters during engagements in and around the hospital.[11] Israeli forces found ammunition and weapons stored in several rooms in al Shifa hospital.[12] The IDF also said that Israeli forces have detained 500 fighters affiliated with either Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ).[13] Hagari called the al Shifa Hospital operation "one of the most successful operations since the start of the war," citing the hundreds of Palestinian fighters detained.[14]

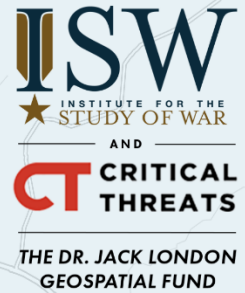
Palestinian militias concentrated their attacks targeting Israeli forces on March 25 at al Shifa Hospital. Palestinian fighters conducted at least nine attacks targeting Israeli forces in the area.[15] Hamas claimed that its fighters fired a rocket-propelled grenade and completely "burned" an Israeli tank close to the hospital.[16] The IDF said that Hamas continued to mortar Israeli forces at al Shifa Hospital.[17]

The IDF Nahal Brigade (162nd Division) continued clearing operations in the central and northern Gaza Strip on March 25. The Nahal Brigade killed a Palestinian fighter who was emerging from a tunnel shaft to target Israeli forces in the central Gaza Strip.[18] The Nahal Brigade is also operating at al Shifa Hospital.[19]

The IDF continued a second round of clearing operations in al Amal neighborhood, western Khan Younis, on March 25. The IDF previously operated in al Amal in February and early March 2024 before shifting ground operations to northern Khan Younis.[20] The IDF 98th Division isolated al Amal on March 24 and 25 before conducting raids on militia infrastructure there.[21] Israeli forces killed over 20 Palestinian fighters and seized military equipment during the operation.[22] Israeli forces questioned dozens of Palestinian suspects in al Amal.[23] The Palestinian Red Crescent reported that Israeli forces ordered doctors and patients to evacuate al Amal hospital on March 24.[24] Palestinian militias did not claim attacks on Israeli forces operating in Khan Younis on March 25.

An Israeli Army Radio correspondent said that the IDF's re-clearing in al Amal is similar to the Israeli operations in the northern Gaza Strip since early 2024.[25] These operations are all consistent with the IDF's "third phase" of operations in the Gaza Strip, which involves ending major combat operations, releasing reservists, transitioning to "targeted raids," and establishing a security buffer zone within the Gaza Strip.[26] The IDF announced the "third phase" in early 2024.[27]

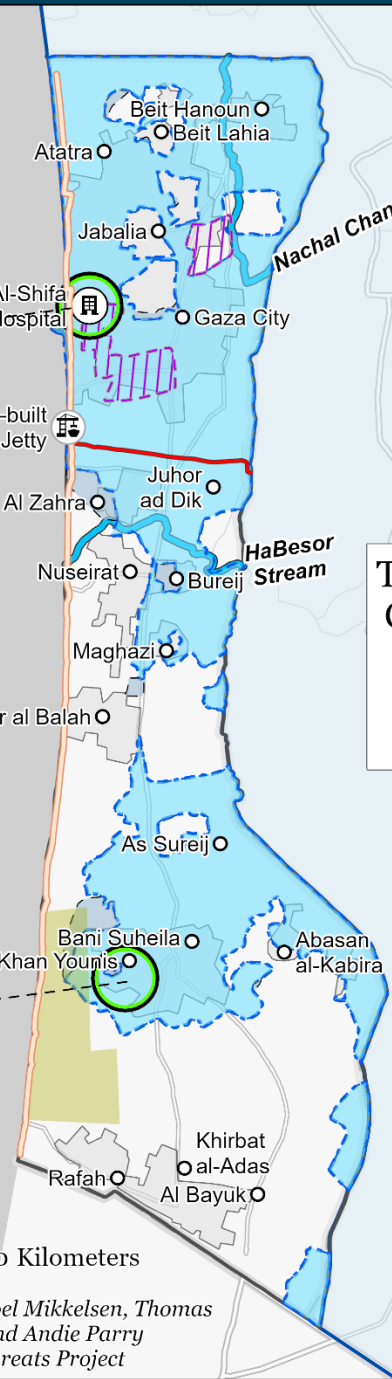
Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of March 25, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Israeli forces continued clearing operations in and around al Shifa Hospital

The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip during Ramadan

Israeli forces continued clearing operations in al Amal neighborhood, western Khan Younis, targeting military infrastructure and Palestinian fighters



0 5 10 20 Kilometers

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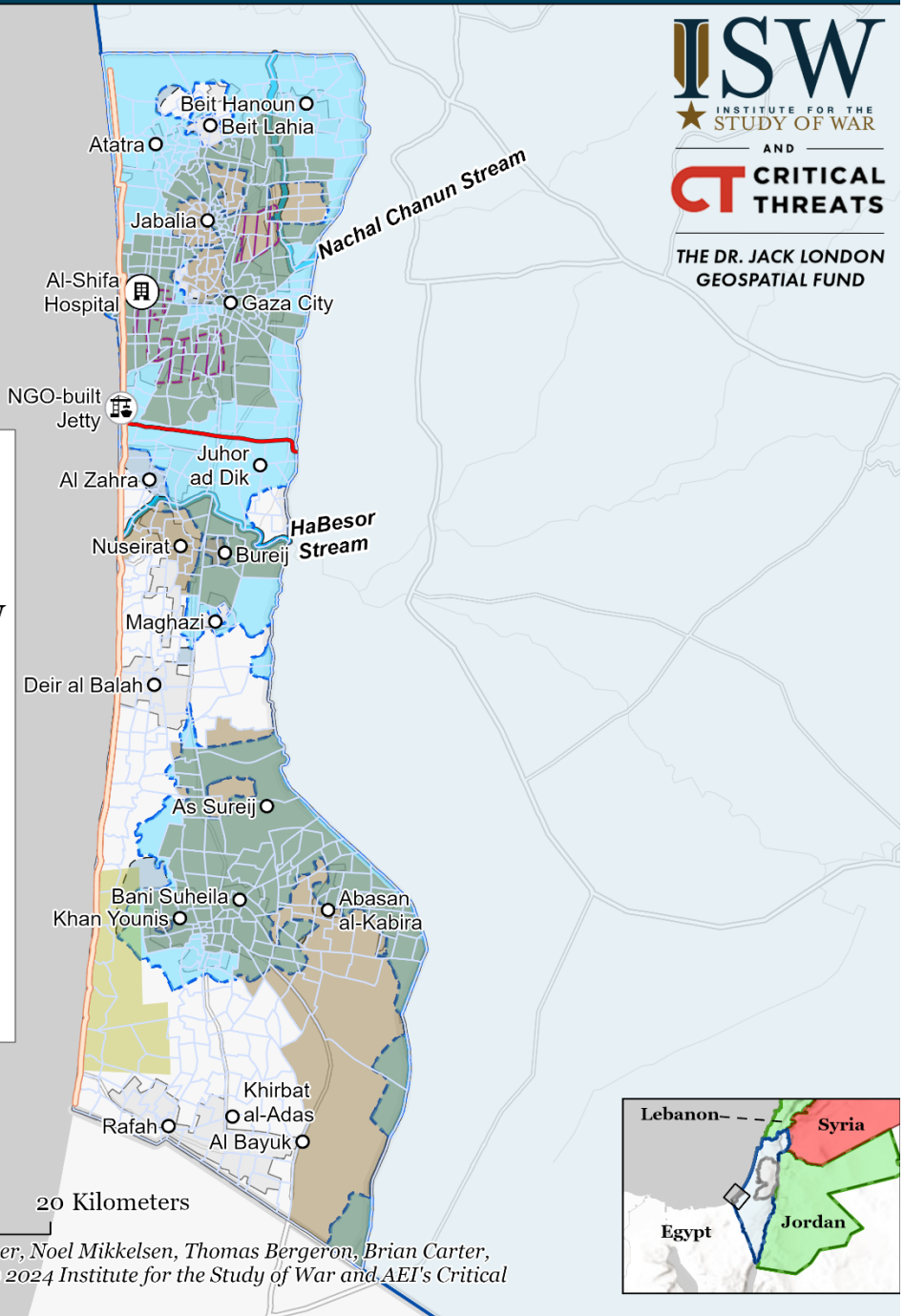
- Israel
- Gaza Strip
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Syria
- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
- Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- Areas Reportedly Infiltrated by Palestinian Militias
- Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
- IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridor on Road 230
- Israeli-Built Highway Route 749
- Significant Water Obstacles
- Densely Urban Areas

* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete

Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip as of March 25, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



CTP-ISW's "Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones" layer shows Israeli evacuation zones announced by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). CTP-ISW used IDF maps and statements to create this layer. Where IDF maps cover part of a zone this layer covers the whole zone to avoid understating the evacuation order. The IDF began announcing these evacuation zones on December 2, 2023, at 0222 ET on X (Twitter)



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Israel	Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*	Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone	Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones
Gaza Strip	Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances	IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridor on Road 230	Densely Urban Areas
Jordan and Lebanon	Areas Reportedly Infiltrated by Palestinian Militias	Israeli-Built Highway Route 749	Significant Water Obstacles
Syria			

* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed a resolution on March 25 calling for “an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan respected by all parties” in the Gaza Strip.[28] The US abstained from the vote.[29] US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby told reporters on March 25 that the US decision to abstain on the UNSC resolution “does not represent a shift in our policy.”[30] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu canceled a March 25 visit of two top Israeli security officials to Washington, DC, in response to the United States’ abstention.[31] US President Joe Biden requested that the Israeli delegation meet with US officials to discuss Israeli plans for a ground operation in Rafah.[32]

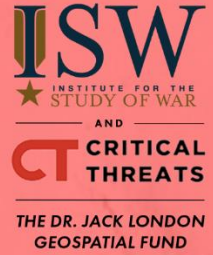
Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant arrived in Washington, D.C., on March 25 to meet with top US military and diplomatic officials despite the US decision to abstain.[33] Israeli War Cabinet Minister Benny Gantz and Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz both signaled the UNSC resolution would not impact Israel’s operations in the Gaza Strip.[34]

Hamas praised the UNSC resolution and affirmed its “readiness to engage in an immediate prisoner exchange process.”[35] Hamas also called for the UNSC to “pressure” Israel to adhere to the ceasefire resolution.

The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), a department within the Israeli Defense Ministry, said that 203 humanitarian aid trucks entered the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours.[36] COGAT reported that 22 of the 203 trucks entered the northern Gaza Strip.[37] Unspecified people looted some of the trucks, according to Israeli media.[38]

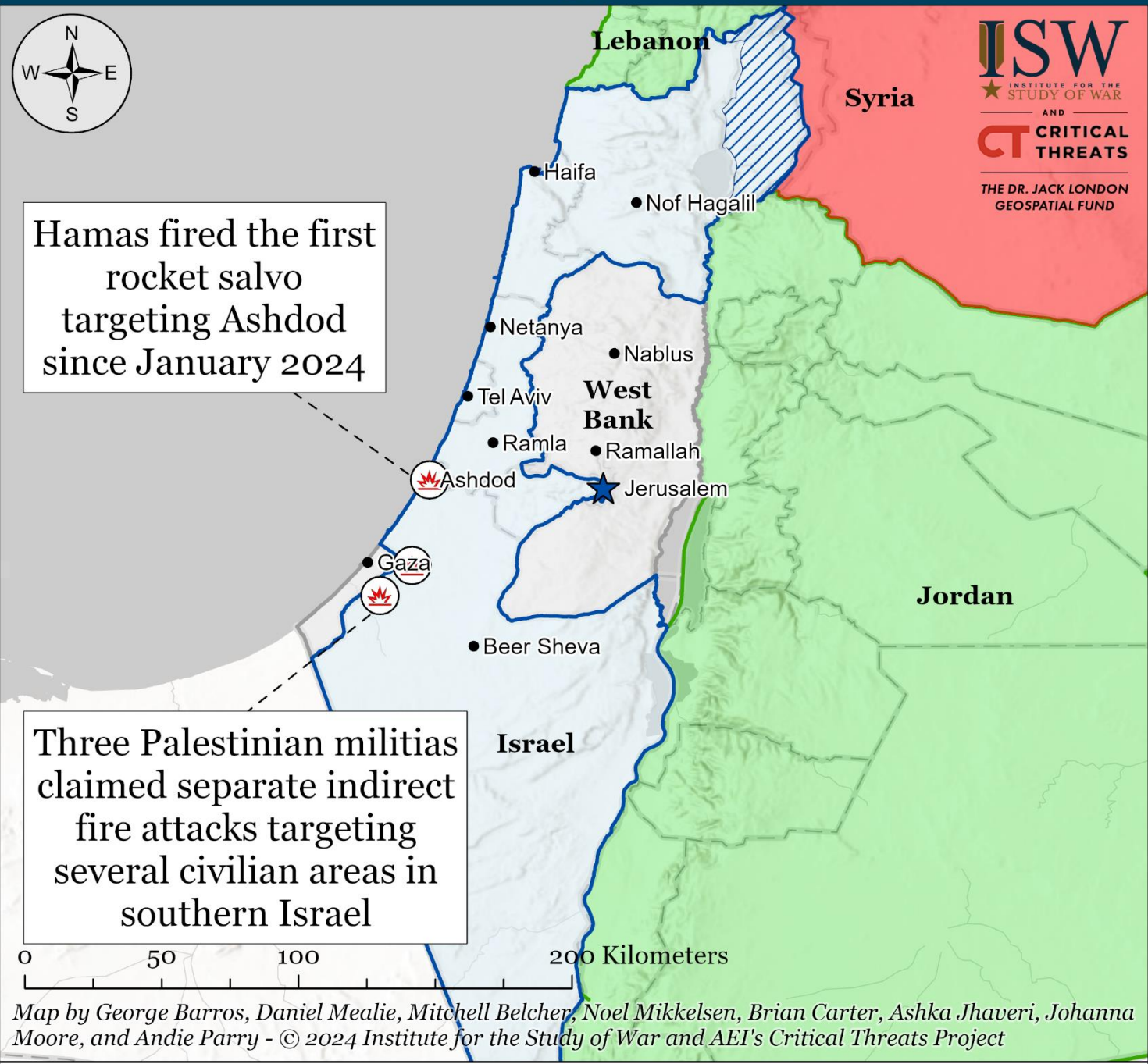
Palestinian militias have conducted three indirect fire attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israel since CTP-ISW’s last data cut off on March 24.[39] Hamas fired eight rockets targeting Ashdod.[40] This attack is the first rocket salvo targeting Ashdod since mid-January 2024.[41] Israel intercepted two of the rockets and six more landed in open areas.[42] PIJ and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a secular leftist Palestinian group fighting alongside Hamas in the war, conducted a combined rocket attack targeting Beerli, southern Israel on March 24.[43] PIJ also fired rockets targeting Sderot on March 25.[44]

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of March 25, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Hamas fired the first rocket salvo targeting Ashdod since January 2024

Three Palestinian militias claimed separate indirect fire attacks targeting several civilian areas in southern Israel



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- Israel
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Golan Heights
- Rocket Attacks
- Gaza Strip and West Bank
- Syria

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

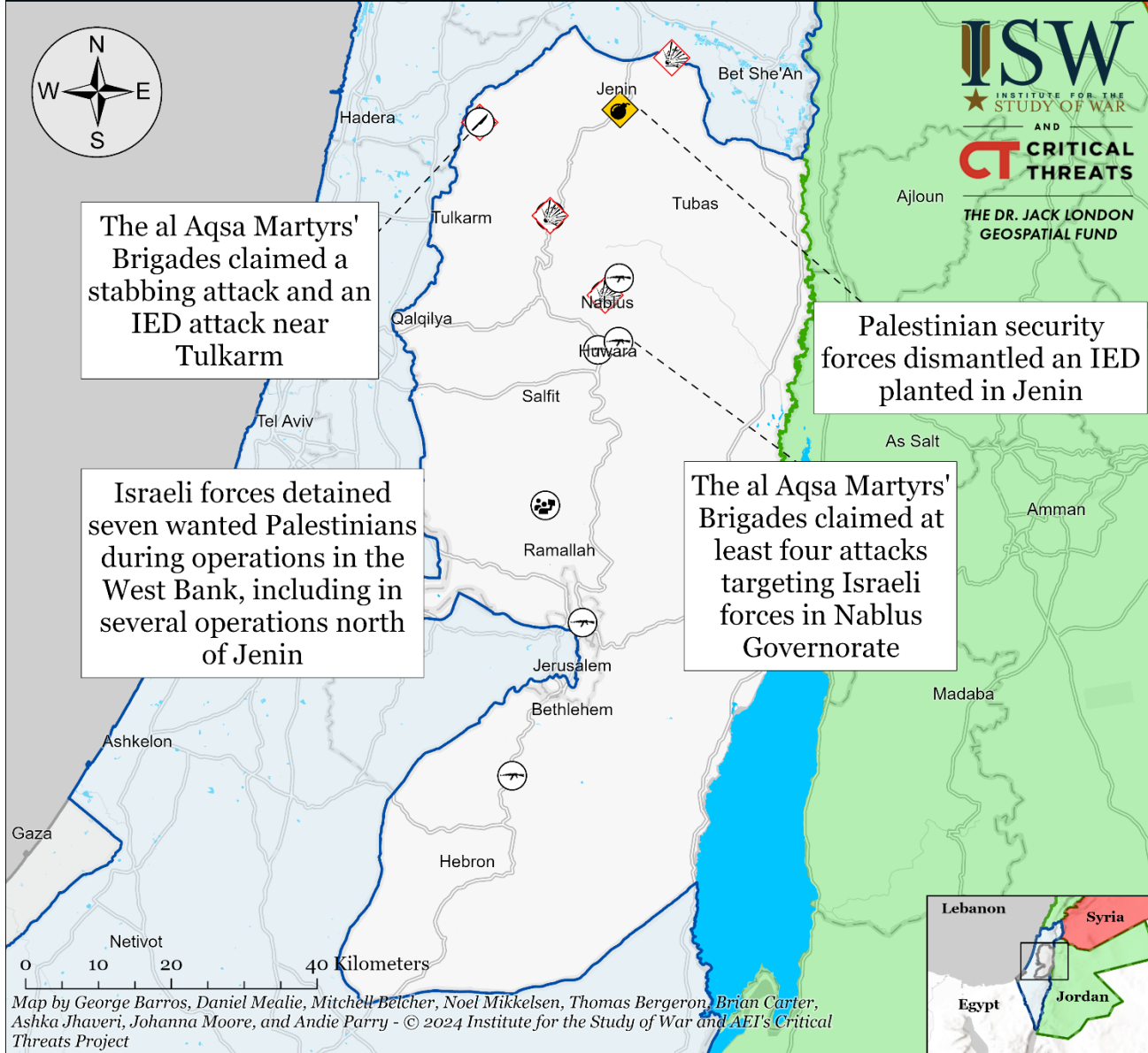
West Bank

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

Israeli forces have clashed with Palestinian fighters in at least nine locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on March 24.[45] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed at least four attacks targeting the IDF in Nablus Governorate.[46] The group also separately claimed attacks targeting Israeli forces in Jenin, Tulkarm, Hebron and near Jerusalem.[47] Israeli forces arrested seven wanted Palestinians across the West Bank on March 25.[48]

Clashes in the West Bank as of March 25, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Israel | Clash (Small Arms Combat) | Stabbing |
| Jordan and Lebanon | Demonstration | Gaza Strip and West Bank |
| | IED Detonated | Syria |
| | IED Planted | |

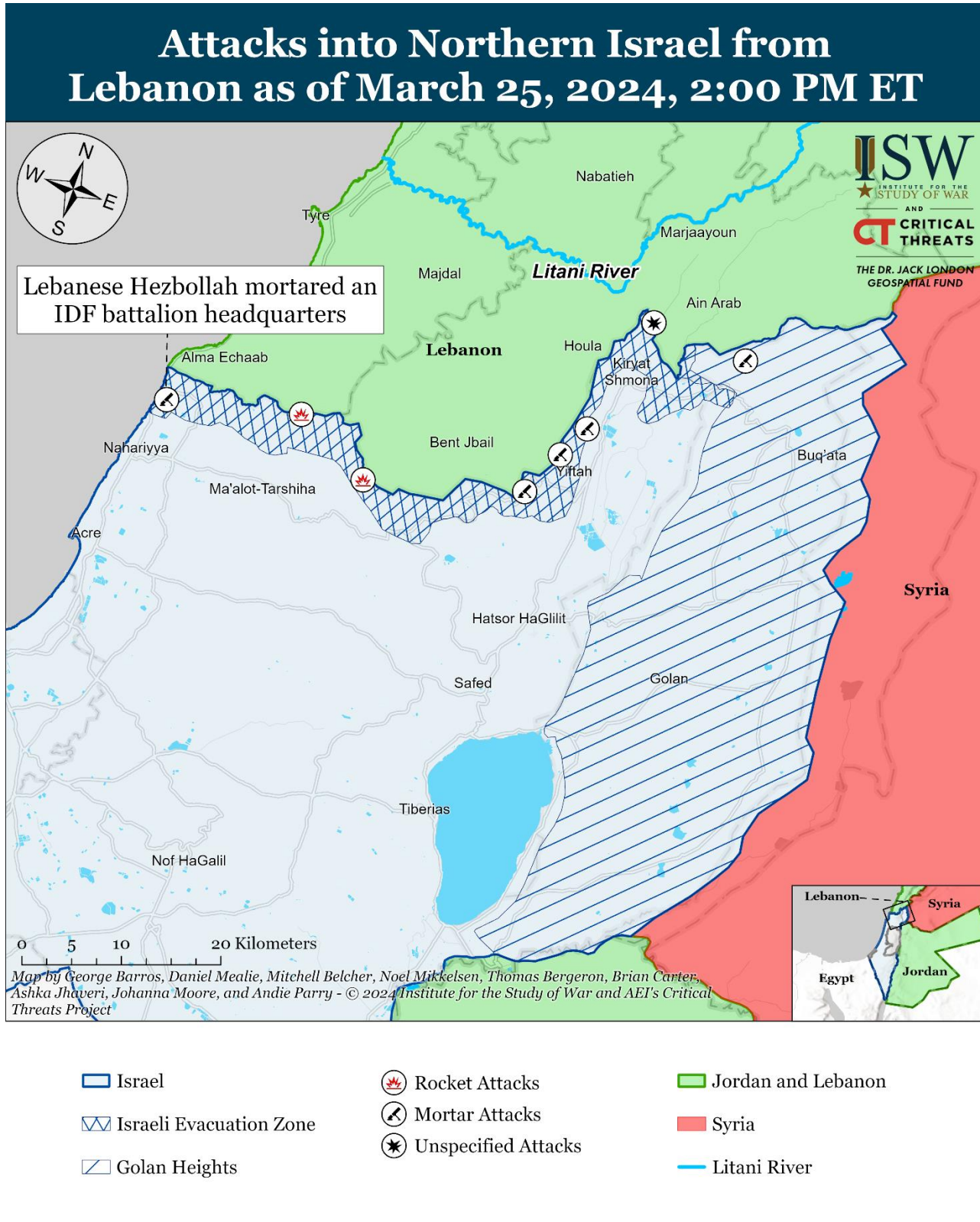
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

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

Lebanese Hezbollah has conducted at least nine attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on March 24.[49]



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

Israel likely conducted an airstrike on March 24 targeting an Iranian-backed militia- and Syrian Arab Army (SAA)-controlled military site near Damascus, Syria.[50] Israel has likely conducted three other airstrikes targeting Iranian-backed militia, SAA, and Lebanese Hezbollah facilities in Syria in March 2023.[51] The IDF previously said in February 2024 that it had conducted a series of airstrikes in Syria since the start of the Israel-Hamas war to interdict Iranian weapons shipments to Hezbollah through Syria.[52]

IRGC Deputy Coordinator Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naghdi reiterated recent regime rhetoric that Israel must be prepared for greater Palestinian attacks against it.[53] Naghdi threatened Israel on March 25, stating that Israel has “prepared the ground for an incident” worse than the October 7 attack and exposed itself to this risk by intensifying its attacks on Palestinians. Naghdi also warned in the same statement that “the people of the region” may soon “hang American soldiers from electric poles in the streets of Baghdad and Manama.” This inflammatory rhetoric is typical for Naghdi and likely does not indicate any shift in Iranian policy or strategic calculus. Tehran Interim Friday Prayer Leader Mohammad Javad Haj Ali Akbari similarly said during Friday prayers on March 22 that Israel must be prepared for a “second, third, and fourth” October 7-style attack.[54] The Iranian supreme leader appoints Friday prayer leaders, but these clerics are not critical to regime decision-making.[55]

The Iranian regime is continuing to exploit the Israel-Hamas war to try to politically isolate Israel in the Middle East. IRGC-affiliated media published images of Iranian protesters in Tehran on March 24 who were calling on Turkey to stop food and oil exports to Israel. The protesters were demonstrating against Israel’s ongoing operations in al Shifa Hospital.[56] Iranian state media published a separate report in November 2023 highlighting student protesters in front of the Turkish Embassy in Tehran who were demonstrating against Turkey’s economic ties with Israel.[57] Iranian officials and media have repeatedly pressured Muslim countries, particularly Turkey and Azerbaijan, to sever economic and political ties with Israel since the Israel-Hamas war began.[58] Azerbaijan supplies approximately 40 percent of Israel’s oil, much of which passes through Turkey on its way to Israel.[59]

The Iranian rial depreciated to a record low of 613,500 rials to one US dollar on March 24.[60] The value of the rial was 32,000 rials to one US dollar when Iran and the United States signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in July 2015.[61] The rial has depreciated since the United States withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018 and has lost more than half of its value since the start of the Mahsa Amini protest movement in September 2022.[62]

The Iranian Law Enforcement Command (LEC) arrested a Jaish al Adl militant on Qeshm Island, Hormozgan Province, Iran, on March 25.[63] Jaish al Adl is a Baloch Salafi-jihadi group that operates along the Iranian border with Pakistan. The arrest of a Jaish al Adl member on Qeshm Island is notable given that Jaish al Adl militants typically operate in Iran’s Sistan and Baluchistan Province that borders Pakistan. The Iranian Law Enforcement Command (LEC) arrested two men in Hormozgan Province in late February 2024 who it accused of being part of Sipah Sahaba, which is a prominent Sunni militant organization that originated in Pakistan.[64] The LEC arrested one of the Sipah Sahaba members on Qeshm Island and the other in Bandar Abbas.[65]

Unspecified “armed men” shot and killed an Iranian border guard near Mirjaveh, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, Iran, on March 25.[66] Iranian state media reported that the “armed men” entered Iran from Pakistan.[67] This incident is part of an uptick in militancy and insecurity in southeastern Iran since December 2023. Jaish al Adl has conducted at least five attacks targeting Iranian security personnel since December 2023.[68] The Afghan branch of the Islamic State separately conducted a terrorist attack in Kerman Province in early January 2024, killing over 90 individuals.[69]

Iran displayed its Shahed 149 or “Gaza” drone during the March 4 to 6 Doha International Maritime Defense Exhibition and Conference.[70] Iran unveiled the drone in May 2021. Iran claims that the drone has a range of 2,000 kilometers and can carry up to 13 precision-guided munitions. The *Wall Street Journal* reported on March 23 that the display marked the first time Iran has showcased the drone outside Iran since the IRGC Aerospace Force unveiled it in May 2021. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that Qatari and Sudanese officials expressed interest in Iranian weapons systems, including small arms, during their visit to the exhibition. Iran has reportedly supplied drones to Sudan since at least 2019.[71] Iranian officials also recently expressed interest in increasing defense exports to Qatar.[72] Iranian Defense Minister Brig. Gen. Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said on March 13 that Iran seeks to develop greater defense cooperation with Armenia, Qatar, Russia, and Turkey.[73] Iran uses its defense exports to expand its military influence abroad and to generate revenue for the Iranian economy.

The Houthi movement threatened to attack oil installations in Saudi Arabia if Saudi Arabia allowed the United States to use Saudi airspace to strike the Houthis, which is probably a Houthi attempt to pressure Saudi Arabia into discouraging US airstrikes targeting Houthi military assets in Yemen.[74] Key Houthi powerbroker and Supreme Political Council member Mohammed Ali al Houthi said on March 24 that the Houthis would target oil installations in Saudi Arabia if the country allowed the United States to use Saudi airspace to strike the Houthis.[75] Mohammad Ali al Houthi added that the ongoing negotiations between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis are a “de-escalation, not a truce,” and that Saudi Arabia must take more serious steps towards a truce.[76]

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[1] <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1772254358932996104> ; <https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1772264711121211880>

[2] <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1772254358932996104>

[3] <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1772254358932996104>

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[5] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-weapons-west-bank-israel-war-8bf12d1f?mod=livecoverage_web

[6] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-weapons-west-bank-israel-war-8bf12d1f?mod=livecoverage_web

[7] https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6095; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6097; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6106

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[9] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1771802835547570549>

[10] <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/1a02c6de-3881-4614-a4c4-9adcb79e1f93> ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1772188540257902771>

[11] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1772188540257902771> ; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/1a02c6de-3881-4614-a4c4-9adcb79e1f93>

[12] <https://www.idf.il/187732>

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[15] <https://t.me/darebmojahden/4616> ;

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- [33] <https://twitter.com/yoavgallant/status/1772292956130590876> ; <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1772290894638571993>
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- [35] <https://t.me/hamasps/19835>
- [36] <https://twitter.com/cogatonline/status/1772287959934341403>
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- [39] <https://t.me/abualiajel/160>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1809>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/17597>

[40] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1809> ; <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1772234045667086790>

[41] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1328>

[42] <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1772234045667086790>

[43] <https://t.me/abualiajel/160>

[44] <https://t.me/sarayaps/17597>

[45] <https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/3104> ; <https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/3105> ; <https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/3106> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6108 ; <https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/3107> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6109 ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1772210314945167600> ; <https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/3109>

[46] <https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/3104> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6109 ; <https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/3109>

[47] <https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/3105> ; <https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/3106> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6108 ; <https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/3107> ;

[48] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1772210314945167600>

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[50] <https://twitter.com/SteeleSyAA/status/1771716573918576795> ; <https://t.me/damascusv011/21506> ; <https://t.me/damascusv011/21505>

[51] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-march-15-2024> ; <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-march-17-2024> ; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-march-19-2024>

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