Iran Update, November 10, 2023

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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 advanced to the al Shifa Hospital, where Israel says Hamas maintains a critical command center. Local sources reported heavy armed clashes in the vicinity of the hospital along the Gaza Strip coast. Israeli forces and tanks also advanced inland in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood west of Jabaliya.
- 2. Palestinian militants claimed seven indirect fire attacks into Israel. Palestinian fighters also clashed with Israeli forces a dozen times, primarily in Hebron and Jenin, in the West Bank.
- 3. Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) and other Iranian-backed fighters conducted nine cross-border attacks into northern Israel.
- 4. The IDF reported that unidentified Iranian-backed militants based in Syria were responsible for the November 9 drone attack that hit the Tze'elim Elementary School in Eilat.
- 5. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq an umbrella term for Iranian-backed Iraqi militias claimed one attack targeting US forces stationed at al Tanf Garrison, Syria.



forces in Syria

the West Bank

o 50 100 200 Kilometers

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

Israel

Gaza Strip and West Bank

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

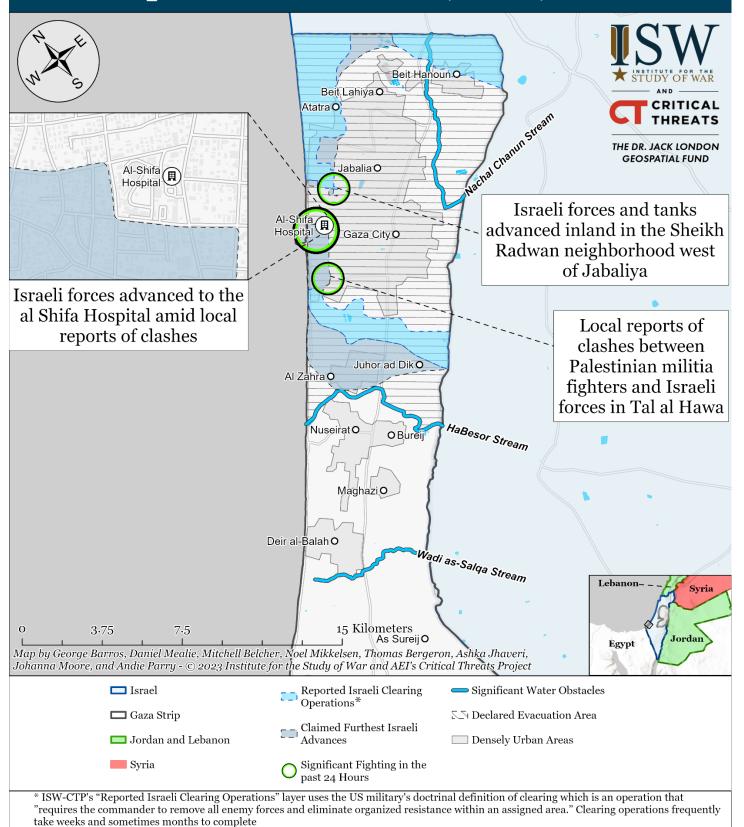
Israeli forces advanced to the al Shifa Hospital, where Israel says Hamas maintains a critical command center. The Wall Street Journal reported that the al Shifa Hospital is evacuating as Israeli forces converge on the medical compound after a series of explosions in the area.[1] The Hamas-run Ministry of Health claims that 50,000-60,000 people are sheltering inside and around the hospital.[2] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Army Radio reported that the medical complex is surrounded.[3] A doctor inside the hospital said the situation is extremely dangerous.[4] A pro-Israel analyst on Twitter (X) reported on November 10 that IDF forces entered the compound, although CTP-ISW cannot independently verify Israeli activity within the compound at the time of this publication.[5] The IDF has repeatedly said that Hamas uses humanitarian infrastructure for its military activities.[6] Hamas uses underground compounds under the hospital to facilitate entry to headquarters and maintains an internal security control center from which it directs rocket fire and militia fighters, for example.[7] The IDF says that Hamas is using patients and staff at the hospital as human shields. The hospital has 1,500 beds and 4,000 staff members.[8]

Local sources reported heavy armed clashes in the vicinity of the al Shifa Hospital along the Gaza Strip coast. A Palestinian journalist said that IDF forces are operating inside several buildings in the vicinity of the hospital.[9] Local sources said there were clashes on Charles de Gaulle Street and near the al Abbas police station which is approximately one kilometer south of the al Shifa Hospital.[10] Local media said al Qassem Brigades—the militant wing of Hamas—militia fighters are clashing with advancing Israeli forces on the al Nasr Street northeast of al Shifa Hospital.[11] The media outlet also said senior al Qassem Brigades commanders have already fled the area.[12]

The al Qassem Brigades have employed a variety of capabilities to attack IDF forces and vehicles since the Israeli ground operations began. The militia fighters have claimed to attack IDF tanks and bulldozers with Yassin 105 rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) and have engaged in small-arms combat with IDF ground forces. [13] The al Qassem Brigades claimed on November 9 to bomb a gathering of IDF soldiers using a drone in an unspecified location, which they previously claimed to do on November 1.[14] The al Qassem Brigades claimed to fire mortars at Israeli forces and RPGs at an Israeli military vehicle near Juhr al Dik, which is consistent with CTP-ISW's assessment that Palestinian militias are attempting to harass and disrupt Israeli ground lines of communication. [15]

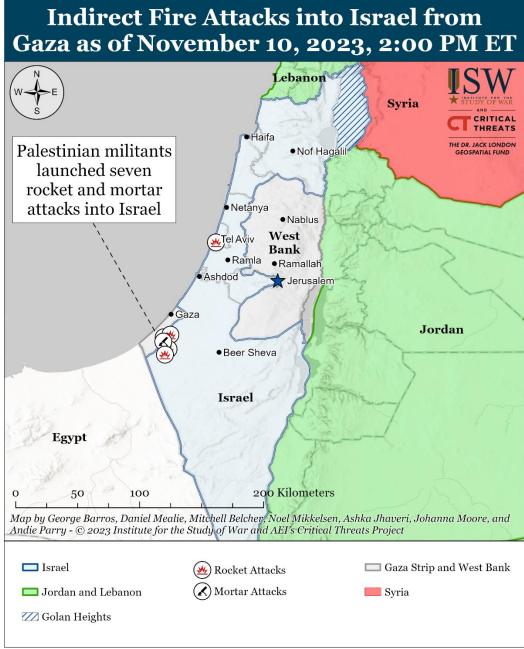
The Palestinian Red Crescent reported that Israeli forces are operating near the al Quds Hospital in the Tal al Hawa neighborhood. [16] Locals reported that there are civilian injuries and that the IDF is besieging those in the hospital. [17] Israeli forces and tanks advanced inland in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood west of Jabaliya. An independent analyst on X (Twitter) geolocated footage of Israeli tanks operating near the Rantisis Specialist Clinic in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood. [18] An employee inside the al Nasr Hospital said that the hospital is surrounded by tanks and heavy gunfire. [19] The al Quds Brigades—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—launched mortars at Israeli forces operating near Karama. [20] The IDF conducted an operation to assassinate Nukhba operatives, who are the naval commandos of the al Qassem Brigades. [21] The IDF killed a company commander and platoon commander, one of whom was directing offensive activity in western Jabaliya. [22]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of November 10, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



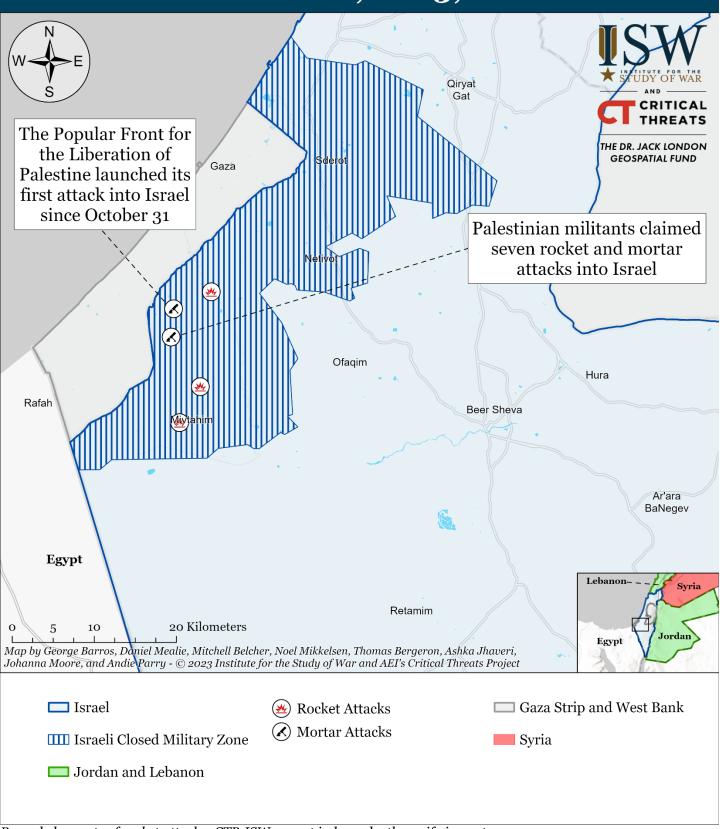
Palestinian militants claimed seven indirect fire attacks into Israel on November 10. The Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed its first indirect fire attack targeting US forces since October 31.[23] The al Qassem Brigades claimed two rocket attacks and one mortar attack targeting Miftahim, Nirim, and Tel Aviv on November 10.[24] The group also claimed a rocket attack targeting an Israeli base in southern Israel.[25] The al Quds Brigades claimed two rocket attacks targeting Nirim and Ein HaBsor.[26]

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said there is no timetable to defeat Hamas.[27] Netanyahu said in an interview that aired on November 9 with Fox News that Israel is proceeding in the Gaza Strip while trying to reduce and minimize civilian casualties and maximize Hamas casualties.[28] Netanyahu said that the fighting continues against Hamas despite the four-hour pauses in the northern Gaza Strip that allow civilians to evacuate.[29] Israeli media N12 reported that the IDF estimates fighting in the Gaza Strip will last a year while the intensity of military operations and combat methods will vary.[30] Netanyahu told Fox News that, "We don't seek to occupy Gaza. And we don't seek to govern Gaza".[31] Netanyahu said on November 10 in a meeting with mayors of towns bordering the Gaza Strip that the IDF will remain in control of the Gaza Strip after the current war ends and will not rely on international forces to oversee security along the border.[32]



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

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of November 10, 2023, 2:00 PM ET

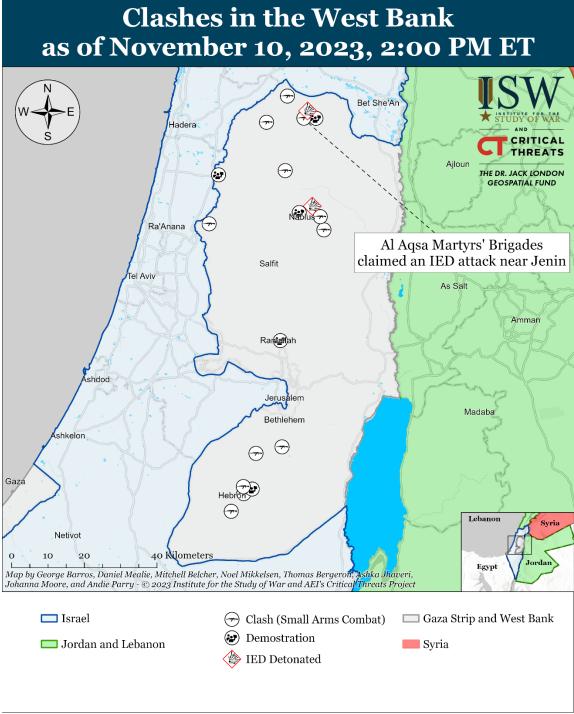


Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

Palestinian fighters clashed with Israeli forces a dozen times, primarily in Hebron and Jenin, in the West Bank on November 10. The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades engaged Israeli forces in two small arms clashes and conducted one IED attack across the West Bank.[33] Palestinians demonstrated in support of Gaza in Nablus, Hebron, Ramallah, and Tulkaram, in the West Bank.[34] Palestinians also demonstrated in Jenin on November 10 following extensive clashes with Israeli forces on November 9 which killed 12 Palestinian fighters.[35] The IDF reported that Israeli forces arrested 41 people across the West Bank, of whom 14 were affiliated with Hamas.[36]

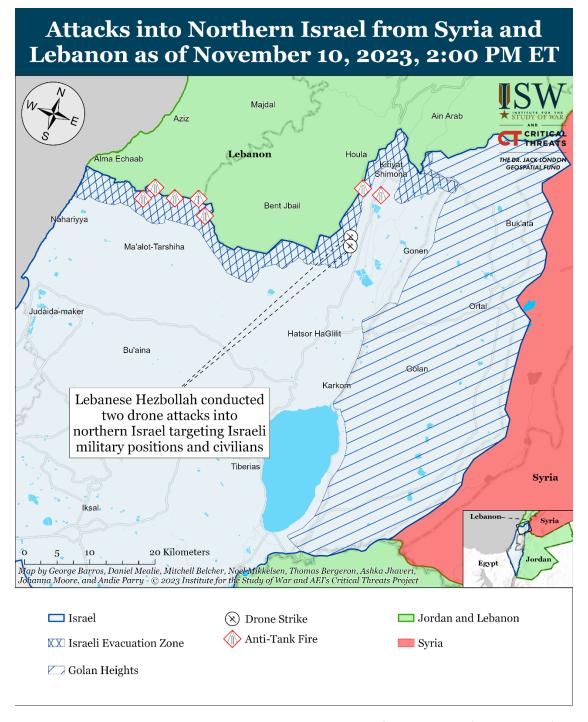


This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

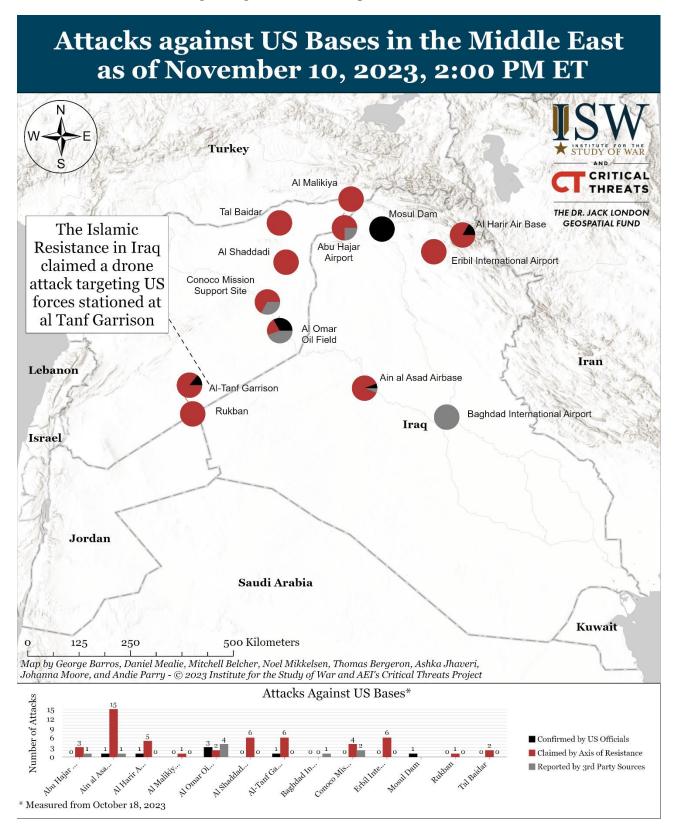
- Draw IDF assets and resources toward northern Israel and fix them there
- Set conditions for successive campaigns into northern Israel

Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) and other Iranian-backed fighters conducted nine cross-border attacks into northern Israel on November 10. LH launched three one-way drones in two attacks and conducted six anti-tank guided missile attacks targeting Israeli forces and civilians.[37] Unspecified fighters separately attacked an Israeli military position with anti-tank guided missiles.[38] The IDF said that the attacks injured five IDF soldiers and that the IDF struck LH sites in southern Lebanon with artillery in response.[39] LH announced on November 9 that seven of its fighters had been killed. It also said on November 10 that 70 LH fighters had been killed since the Israel-Hamas war began.[40] LH Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah is set to give a speech on November 11, which will mark his second public statement on the war.[41]



<u>Iran and Axis of Resistance</u> 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 IDF reported that unidentified Iranian-backed militants based in Syria were responsible for the November 9 drone attack that hit the Tze'elim Elementary School in Eilat.[42] The IDF reported that its forces conducted airstrikes into Syria on November 9 in retaliation for the attack.[43] The Jerusalem Post reported that the same unidentified Iranian-backed militants fired a second drone into Israeli territory from Syria on November 10.[44] The Israeli open-source media outlet Israel Radar cited an unidentified Israeli defense official who claimed that the Iranian-backed Imam Hussein Division was responsible for both drone attacks into Israel.[45] The IRGC formed the Imam Hussein Division, also known as the Imam Hussein Brigades, in 2016. The Imam Hussain Division is armed with Iranian-made drones and surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles, according to Israeli intelligence.[46] The Imam Hussein Division has conducted attacks into Israel from the Golan Heights and has targeted US forces stationed in eastern Syria.[47]

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq – an umbrella term for Iranian-backed Iraqi militias – claimed one attack targeting US forces stationed at al Tanf Garrison, Syria on November 10.[48] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq stated that its militants launched a one-way attack drone at the base and claimed that the drone successfully hit its intended target.[49] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed 52 of the 63 reported attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria since October 18. This is the sixth attack the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed targeting US forces stationed at al Tanf Garrison since October 18.[50]

An Iranian state media delegation traveled to Beirut on November 9 to meet with LH-affiliated media officials, likely as part of the Iranian regime's ongoing effort to coordinate Axis of Resistance messaging and information operations.[51] Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) head Peyman Jebelli and IRIB World Service head Ahmed Norouzi met with LH-controlled outlet al Manar officials on November 10.[52] IRIB is a state-controlled outlet whose head is directly appointed by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.[53] The US State Department banned al Manar from broadcasting in the United States in 2004 and the US Treasury Department designated it as a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity" in 2006.[54] Jebelli emphasized IRIB's support for Axis of Resistance-affiliated media and praised al Manar's "faithful representation" of the Israel-Hamas war during his meeting with al Manar officials. Iranian officials and media have repeatedly accused Western media of spreading lies about Hamas and "covering up Israeli crimes" since the start of the war on October 7.[55] Iranian officials have also accused Israel of killing journalists to prevent them from exposing "Israeli crimes."[56] The IRIB delegation is slated to meet with Axis of Resistance leaders and Lebanese officials in the coming days. Unspecified Iranian media officials recently traveled to Beirut on November 2 to meet with representatives of Hamas and PIJ, as CTP-ISW previously reported.[57]

The Iranian regime is seizing on Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's pro-Hamas, anti-Israel stance on the Israel-Hamas war to try to undermine Turkish-Israeli rapprochement. President Ebrahim Raisi urged Turkey to cut its economic and political ties with Israel during a meeting with Erdogan on the sidelines of the Economic Cooperation Organization summit in Tashkent on November 9.[58] Raisi stated that Muslim countries, including Iran and Turkey, are facing a "divine test" to confront "Israeli crimes."[59] Iranian state and IRGC-affiliated media separately highlighted student protests against Turkish exports of food and oil to Israel in front of the Turkish Embassy in Tehran on November 9.[60] The students chanted slogans such as "Turkish food and oil bring fire to the battle" and "Your barrels of oil are accomplices in the [killings] of children."[61] Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian met with Erdogan and Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Hakan Fidan in Ankara on November 1, during which time he praised Erdogan's "strong and accurate" positions on the Israel-Hamas war.[62]

Turkey and Israel have taken steps to improve relations in recent years. Israeli President Isaac Herzog met with Erdogan in Ankara in March 2022.[63] This meeting marked the highest-level engagement between Israeli and Turkish officials in 14 years.[64] Israel and Turkey additionally restored full diplomatic ties in August 2022.[65] Erdogan has adopted a pro-Hamas stance since the start of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7, however.[66] Erdogan described Hamas as a "liberation group" on October 25 and organized a pro-Palestine rally in Istanbul on October 28, as CTP-ISW previously reported.[67] The Iranian regime thus seeks to capitalize on the current strain in Turkish-Israeli relations to advance its objective to isolate Israel in the Middle East.

Moderate Iranian political figures are likely coordinating an attack on the regime's conduct vis-à-vis the Israel-Hamas war to exploit domestic anti-Axis of Resistance sentiments in advance of the parliamentary elections in March 2024. Former President Hassan Rouhani warned the regime against taking any "imprecise action" that could draw Iran into a war with Israel while noting divisions between Iranians over support for the Palestinian resistance during a Moderation and Development Party Central Council Meeting in Tehran on November 9.[68] Rouhani's former Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif similarly warned against Iran being drawn into the Israel-Hamas war during a panel on the application of international law to the war at the Central Bar Association in Tehran on November 8.[69] Zarif also argued that ordinary Iranians are "tired of paying the cost" of the regime's support for regional proxies and criticized the overly enthusiastic support of regime officials for the Palestinian cause.

- Iranian protesters have long been critical of Iranian regime support for the Axis of Resistance, particularly in Lebanon and Palestine. These anti-Axis sentiments have resurfaced since the start of the Israel-Hamas war. Social media users claimed that unspecified individuals set fire to a propaganda banner expressing support for Hamas in Mashhad on November 6.[70] An unidentified Iranian individual published a video on his social media account that expressed support for Israel behind a homemade Israeli flag on November 5.[71] Unidentified individuals expressed contempt for the speaker voicing support for Hamas during a pro-Hamas rally in Tehran on October 18.[72]
- CTP-ISW previously assessed that Rouhani is trying to reestablish himself and other like-minded moderates in the domestic political arena ahead of the 2024 elections. [73] Rouhani has been consistently promoting his administration's economic, foreign, defense, and health policies in publicized meetings with his former cabinet members. Iranian state media has reported that Rouhani will promote a list of moderate candidates in the 2024 elections, as CTP-ISW previously reported. [74]

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