



# Spotlight on Iran

May 27, 2021 – June 10, 2021

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## Overview

- ▶ Two senior officers, IRGC advisers to the Syrian army, were ambushed by ISIS and killed in Syria on their way from Deir ez-Zor to Palmyra. The Iranian media avoided referring to them as senior officers.
- ▶ On June 9, the commander of the IRGC's Qods Force arrived for talks in Baghdad with senior Iraqi politicians and commanders of Shia militias. The visit took place against the backdrop of the latest escalation between the Iraqi government and the Shia militias following the arrest of a senior militia commander by Iraqi security forces answering to the government.
- ▶ The New York Times reported that Iran is behind several attacks carried out in recent months against American targets in Iraq using advanced armed drones.
- ▶ The Iranian minister of energy announced that Iraq agreed to release 125 million dollars of the Iranian funds frozen in Iraqi banks to allow Iran to purchase vaccines against COVID-19. Meanwhile, a high-ranking delegation of economic officials, headed by Iraq's minister of finance, visited Tehran and discussed the matter of the Iraqi debt to Iran. Shortly afterwards, the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity announced that senior Iraqi officials agreed on a timetable for settling Iraq's debt to allow the resumption of supplying gas from Iran to its neighbor to the west.
- ▶ A senior Iranian official announced that Iran will participate in the 62<sup>nd</sup> International Trade Fair, set to commence in Syria in late August 2021.
- ▶ In a media interview, the editor of the Lebanese pro-Hezbollah paper, al-Akhbar, claimed that during the last round of fighting between Israel and the factions in Gaza, a joint operations room was set up in Beirut, made up of commanders from Hezbollah, the IRGC's

Qods Force, Hamas and other Palestinian factions. A source within the Qods Force denied the report.

► Iranian officials continue to present the conclusion of the fighting in Gaza as a victory for the “resistance front.” The commander of the IRGC’s Qods Force declared that the Palestinians should prepare for governing all of Palestine and advised “the Zionists” to leave Palestine and buy back the homes that they had sold off abroad prior to their arrival in Israel. The adviser to the speaker of the Majlis stated that the Israeli operation in Gaza exposed “the fragility of the Zionist entity.”

## Iranian Involvement in Syria

► Two IRGC senior officers who served as advisers to the Syrian army were killed in Syria. The Iranian media reported that Hassan Abdollahzadeh and Mohsen Abbasi had been ambushed by ISIS and killed on their way from Deir ez-Zor to Palmyra (Mehr, June 3, 2021). The Iranian media avoided referring to them as senior officers.



**Two IRGC fighters killed in Syria. (Mehr, June 3)**

► The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a congratulatory message on the occasion of the victory of Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian elections. The message congratulated the Syrian people and its government for the elections and remarked that the participation of Syria’s citizens is an important step in restoring peace, stability and prosperity in Syria. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed Iran’s support for Syria’s sovereignty and the right of

citizens of the country to determine their own fate without any foreign intervention. The Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani, also congratulated Assad for his victory in the elections. In his letter to President Assad, Rouhani stated that the mass participation of the Syrian people in the elections is an important step in determining Syria's fate and ensuring its prosperity and expressed hope for expanding cooperation between Iran and Syria (ISNA, May 28).

► The Executive Direction on Arab and African Countries at the Iranian Organization for Trade Development, Farzad Piltan, announced that Iran will participate in the 62<sup>nd</sup> International Trade Fair that will be held in Syria between August 25 until September 3, 2021. The Fair will be run by the Company for International Fairs of Iran, in cooperation with the joint Iranian-Syrian Chamber of Commerce, the Bureau for Developing Iranian and Syrian ties, and the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He reported that various products will be on display at the Fair, including: machinery and equipment for food manufacturing, agricultural machinery and equipment, medical equipment, construction equipment, cooling and heating systems, carpets, electronics, plastic goods, water and sanitation equipment, chemicals and automobiles (ILNA, June 2).



**The Iranian booth in the 60<sup>th</sup> International Trade Fair held in Damascus in September 2018.  
(IRNA, September 2, 2018)**

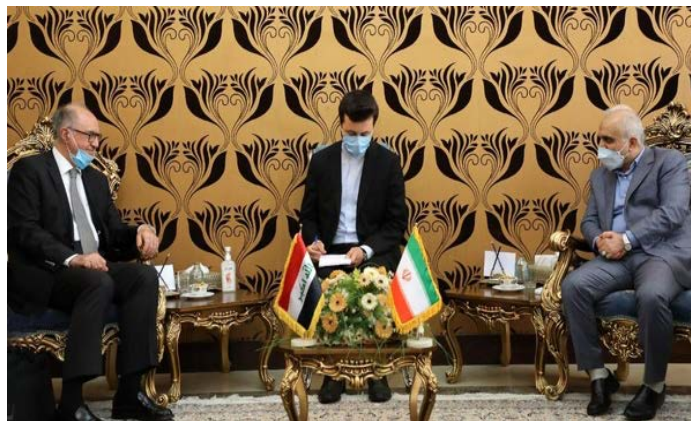
## Iranian Involvement in Iraq

► Iraqi media outlets reported that on June 9, the Commander of the IRGC's Qods Force, Esmail Qa'ani, arrived for a visit in Baghdad. According to these reports, he is expected to hold meetings with senior Iraqi government officials, politicians and commanders of the Shia

militias and discuss the recent developments in Iraq, and particularly the escalation between the government of Mustafa al-Kazimi and the Popular Mobilization Units (al-Hashd al-Shaabi, the umbrella organization of the Shia militias) following the arrest of the operations' commander of the Hashd in al-Anbar Province, Qasim Muslih, who was released from detention on June 9. In addition, the commander of the Qods Force is set to discuss with Iraqi officials the upcoming general elections in the country, scheduled for October 2021 (al-Arabiya, June 9).

► The American newspaper, the New York Times reported (June 4), that in recent months, Iraq witnessed at least three attacks on American targets utilizing unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that were manufactured in Iran or included Iranian technological components. According to this report, the UAVs used by the pro-Iranian militias have become more sophisticated and cheaper owing to the technology provided by the IRGC's Qods Force to the militias. American and Iraqi officials told the newspaper that Iran is behind the attacks using the sophisticated drones, and that the attacks are carried out in a manner intended to reduce the number of fatalities, to avoid an American retaliation. The report also stated that the members of the Iraqi factions used by the Iranians to attack the American targets undergo training by the IRGC in Iraqi bases in Lebanon and Iran.

► On May 29, the Iranian Minister of Energy, Reza Ardakanian, announced that Iraq had agreed to release 125 million dollars of the Iranian funds frozen in Iraq's Trade Bank, to allow Iran to purchase 16 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines. The funds were transferred to a Swiss bank ahead of their transfer to Iran. Meanwhile, a delegation made up of senior economic officials, headed by the Iraqi Minister of Finance, Ali Abdul-Amir Allawi, arrived for a visit in Tehran and met with the Iranian ministers of economy and oil. During the meetings, the Iraqi delegation discussed the matter of the Iraqi debt to Iran for the import of gas and electricity, and economic cooperation between the two countries in the sectors of trade, banking, insurance, and investments (Tasnim, May 29). On June 4, the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity announced that the Iraqi ministers of electricity and finance and the chairman of the Iraqi Trade Bank agreed on a timetable to repay Iraq's debt to Iran, to allow for the resumption of gas supply from Iran to Iraq (Tasnim, June 4).



**The meeting between the Iranian minister of economy with the Iraqi minister of finance.  
(Tasnim, May 29)**

## Iranian Involvement in the Palestinian Arena

- ▶ The Editor of the pro-Hezbollah newspaper, al-Akhbar, Ibrahim al-Amin, claimed in an interview to the al-Manar TV Channel (May 28), that during the latest round of conflict between Israel and the factions in Gaza, a joint operations room was established in Beirut, which was made up of commanders of the IRGC, Hezbollah, Hamas and other Palestinian factions. The room was responsible for coordinating between the two sides, including information and intelligence sharing and tactical cooperation. He remarked that the Commander of the IRGC's Qods Force, Esmail Qa'ani, visited Beirut twice during the military conflagration.
- ▶ Following the interview, an official with the IRGC's Qods Force denied to the Lebanese al-Mayadeen TV Channel (May 29) the existence of a joint operations room. He stated that Iran has assisted, is assisting and will assist the "resistance in Palestine," but Palestinians alone were the ones who oversaw the last campaign in Gaza, and a joint operations room did not operate out of Beirut.
- ▶ During a ceremony marking the 40<sup>th</sup> day (Arbayeen) since the passing of the IRGC's Deputy Commander, Mohammad Hejazi, the Commander of the IRGC's Qods Force, Esmail Qa'ani, praised the struggle of the Palestinians against Israel. He remarked that the era when Israel wanted to kill the children of Palestine has passed, and now Palestinian children are the ones manufacturing the weapons in their disposal, including the 3,000 rockets fired at Israel during the last military confrontation. Qa'ani added that from now on, the Palestinians ought to

prepare for governing all of Palestine, including the 1948 territories. He advised all the Zionists to leave Palestine and purchase the homes they once sold in Europe, the United States, and other countries, before their prices rise. Qa'ani added that during the last conflict, the Palestinians avoided firing rockets toward much of the infrastructure in “occupied Palestine,” because soon enough, they will be able to use that infrastructure themselves (Tasnim, May 29).



**The commander of the IRGC's Qods Force. (Tasnim, May 29)**

► Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the Adviser on International Affairs to the Speaker of the Iranian Majlis, stated in an interview to the Yemeni TV Channel al-Masirah (May 28) that the recent fighting in Gaza exposed the fragility of the “Zionist entity” and the failure of the Iron Dome system, despite U.S. and Western support provided to Israel. He proclaimed that the dream of the Zionists to establish a Jewish state “from the Nile to the Euphrates” will never be realized and stressed that Iran will not hesitate to answer all the needs of the Palestinian people and its leadership.