



# Spotlight on Iran

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## Overview

- ▶ On July 9, an Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) fighter was killed in Syria, likely in a mine explosion.
- ▶ The Commander of the IRGC's Qods Force, Esmail Qa'ani, recently visited Syria, during which he stopped over at the headquarters of the Fatemiyoun Brigade, an Afghan militia operating under IRGC control in Syria. Iranian media did not provide additional details about the visit or the substance of the meetings Qa'ani held.
- ▶ In late July, an Iranian trade delegation is set to visit Syria to further cooperation between the cement industries of the two countries.
- ▶ In mid-July, the Iranian Minister of Intelligence, Mahmoud Alavi, arrived for a visit in Baghdad. During the visit he met with senior Iraqi government officials and with the commander of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU, al-Hashd al-Shaabi). The visit was conducted merely a week after the visit to Baghdad of the Head of the Intelligence Organization of the IRGC, Hossein Taeb.
- ▶ The Iranian President-Elect, Ebrahim Raisi, spoke on the phone with the head of Hamas' Politburo and the secretary general of Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Raisi stressed to them Iran's determination to continue supporting the Palestinians "until the liberation of Jerusalem."

## Iranian Involvement in Syria and Lebanon

- ▶ On July 9, Iranian media reported the death of an IRGC fighter, Reza Safdi, in Syria, likely in a mine explosion (ISNA, July 9).



**The IRGC fighter killed in Syria. (ISNA, July 9)**

► Based on a report published on the Twitter account of the Commander of the IRGC's Qods Force, Esmail Qa'ani (July 9), it appears that he recently visited Syria. During the visit, he toured the headquarters of the Fatemiyoun Brigade, an Afghan militia operating under IRGC guidance in Syria. Iranian media did not provide additional details about the visit or the substance of the meetings Qa'ani held. According to sources in Syria, he was an officer (Shaam, July 9).



**The visit of Esmail Qa'ani to the headquarters of the Fatemiyoun Brigade in Syria. (Twitter account of Esmail Qa'ani, July 9)**

► Last week, an Iranian parliamentary delegation headed by Abbas Golrou, the Deputy Chairman of the Iranian-Syrian Friendship Association of the Iranian Majlis, and a Member of the Majlis' Foreign Relations and National Security Committee, paid a visit to Syria. During the visit, the delegation met with senior Syrian government officials including the Prime Minister Hussein Arnous, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Faisal Mekdad, the Speaker of Parliament Hammoudeh Sabbagh, and the Adviser to President Assad, Bouthaina Shaaban. During their meetings in Damascus, the members of the delegation deliberated expanding ties between the

two countries, particularly in the economic sphere. The situation in Syria and regional and global developments were discussed as well. The Syrian Prime Minister Arnous stressed in his meeting with the delegation that his government is interested in bolstering economic and trade cooperation with Iran and expressed his appreciation for Iran's support to his country in all spheres during the country's civil war (Tehran Times; ISNA, July 9-11).



**The meeting of the Iranian parliamentary delegation with the Syrian Prime Minister, Arnous.  
(SANA, July 9)**

► In mid-July, a delegation of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by the Head of the Department for Peace and International Security, Reza Najafi, visited Damascus and conducted meetings with senior Syrian government officials. In their meeting with the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Faysal Mikdad, the two sides discussed ways to bolster the coordination and consultation processes between the two governments in various spheres. The Syrian minister of foreign affairs thanked Iran for its political, military, and economic support for Syria and stressed the depth of strategic relations between the two countries. The assistant to the Iranian minister of foreign affairs stated that the visit of the delegation is intended to deepen the cooperation between the Iranian ministry of affairs and its Syrian counterpart (SANA, July 15).

► The Joint Iranian-Syrian Chamber of Commerce announced its intention to dispatch an Iranian trade delegation to Syria, which is set to visit the country between July 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. The delegation, which will be comprised of businessmen and representatives of cement companies, is set to take part in the International Fair in Damascus, meet with traders, manufacturers, and Syrian importers linked to the cement industry, and discuss the importation of cement from Iran to Syria (the website of the Joint Chamber of Commerce, July 12).

► The Iranian Cultural Attaché in Damascus, Alireza Fadavi, who also serves as the head of the Iranian Cultural Center in Lattakia, met with the President of the Tishreen University in Lattakia, Bassam Hassan, and spoke to him about deepening cultural cooperation between the university and the Iranian Cultural Center and establishing a faculty for the study of Persian language and literature at the University. The Iranian cultural attaché stated in the meeting that the Iranian Cultural Center is willing to assist in this matter. The two also discussed granting stipends to Syrian students and knowledge-sharing by bringing Iranian lecturers to the University. In the meeting between the Iranian cultural attaché and the Secretary of the Baath Party Branch at Tishreen University, Mirna Dalalah, the two discussed deepening scientific and cultural ties between the two countries (Tasnim, July 12). In April 2021, the Tasnim news agency reported about Iranian efforts to promote Iranian culture in Syria, which includes mainly expanding the opportunities for learning Persian in Syria.

## Iranian Involvement in Iraq

► In mid-July, the Iranian Minister of Intelligence, Mahmoud Alavi, arrived for a visit in Baghdad, where he met with senior Iraqi government officials, chief among them Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kazimi and President Barham Salim. He also met with the Commander of the Popular Mobilization Units (the umbrella of the Shia militias in Iraq), Faleh al-Fayyad (Fars, July 14; ISNA, July 15).



**The Iranian minister of intelligence visits the location of the assassination of Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis near the Baghdad Airport.  
(Fars, July 14)**

► The visit of the minister of intelligence occurred merely a week after the visit of the Head of the Intelligence Organization of the IRGC, Hossein Taeb, to Iraq, during which he met with senior Iraqi government officials and commanders of the Shia Iraqi militias backed by Iran.

▶ On July 11, the Iranian Ambassador to Iraq, Iraj Masjedi, met with the Iraqi Deputy Minister of Health and Environment, Hani al-Uqabi, and discussed expanding cooperation between the two countries concerning health. In addition, the two discussed the decision of the Iraqi government to renew the visits of Iranian pilgrims to the Shia holy sites in Iraq, while aiming to maintain COVID-19 precautions (Tasnim, July 11).



**The meeting between the Iraqi deputy minister of health and Iranian ambassador to Iraq.  
(Tasnim, July 11)**

## Iranian Involvement in the Palestinian Arena

▶ On July 13, the Iranian President-Elect, Ebrahim Raisi, spoke on the phone with the Head of Hamas' Politburo, Ismail Haniyeh, and with the Secretary General of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Ziad Nakhleh. The two senior Palestinian operatives congratulated Raisi for his victory in the presidential election in Iran and thanked him for Iran's support for the Palestinians. Raisi congratulated both for the "great victory" of the Palestinians in the last conflagration in Gaza and stressed that Iran will maintain its support for the Palestinians until the "liberation of Jerusalem" (Fars, July 13).