



# Spotlight on Iran

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Author: Dr. Raz Zimmt

## Overview

- ▶ Senior “resistance axis” leaders used their presence in the inauguration ceremony of the Iranian President, Ebrahim Raisi, held in Tehran on August 5, to hold a series of meetings with senior Iranian regime officials. The commander of the Popular Mobilization Units (Hashd al-Shaabi, the umbrella group of the Shia pro-Iranian militias in Iraq) met with President Raisi, with the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council and with the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), who stressed the need to accelerate the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq. The head of Hamas’ Politburo and the secretary general of Palestinian Islamic Jihad also met the three top Iranian officials, who all stressed Iran’s support for the Palestinians. Dozens of foreign delegations, including the Deputy Secretary General of Hezbollah, Naim Qasem, and representatives of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) took part in the swearing-in ceremony.
- ▶ The Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, stated again that his organization intends to import fuel from Iran to Lebanon in light of the severe fuel shortages in Lebanon. In a TV interview Nasrallah declared that the import of diesel fuel and benzine from Iran to Lebanon is a done fact and will be done “in broad daylight.”
- ▶ A senior official in the Syrian state electricity company reported that soon deals will be concluded with a Russian company and an Iranian company for the maintenance of two central power stations in Syria.
- ▶ On August 10, the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fuad Hussein, arrived for a visit in Iran. During the meeting, he presented an invitation to President Raisi to take part in a conference of several regional leaders. The summit is organized by Iraq and is set to take place in Baghdad at the end of August.

## Iranian Involvement in Syria and Lebanon

- ▶ Najwan al-Khouri, the director of Syria's public electricity company, reported that soon Damascus will conclude deals with a Russian company and an Iranian firm for the maintenance of two major power stations in Syria. He remarked that a Russian company will assume responsibility for the maintenance of the Tishreen power station, while the Iranian company will be charged with the maintenance work at the Mehardeh station west of the city of Hama. In exchange for the services provided by the Iranian company, Syria will provide Iran with phosphate (Shaam News Agency, August 5).
- ▶ The Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, declared again that the organization intends to import fuel from Iran to Syria in light of the crippling shortages of fuel in the country. In early August, Lebanese media outlets reported that Hezbollah informed its members that the movement intends to soon bring fuel from Iran to Lebanon through the land or sea, and that members of the organization are present in Iran to conclude the deliberations on this matter. In a speech he delivered on August 15, Nasrallah proclaimed that Hezbollah will surely import diesel fuel (mazout) and benzine from Iran, and that this will be conducted in broad daylight. He remarked that he intends to provide additional details on this matter in the coming days (al-Mayadeen, August 15). And on August 18, he did announce that an Iranian oil-fueled ship would leave for Lebanon within hours.



**The Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah. (al-Mayadeen, August 15)**

## Iranian Involvement in Iraq

▶ On August 6, the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, met with the Commander of the Popular Mobilization Units (umbrella organization of Shia militias in Iraq), Faleh al-Fayyad, who arrived in Tehran to attend the swearing-in ceremony of President Raisi. Shamkhani praised the role of the Shia militias in ensuring Iraq's stability and security and stressed the need to bolster the militias and increase the coordination between them and the Iraqi Army. In addition, Shamkhani called for accelerating the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq (ILNA, August 7). During his visit to Tehran, al-Fayyad also met with the Iranian President Raisi, and the Commander of the IRGC, Hossein Salami, who praised the work of the Shia militias in Iraq, asserting that the Americans are faced with two bad options: stay in Iraq and be harmed, or fail and withdraw from Iraq. Al-Fayyad thanked Iran and the IRGC for their support to Iraq and the Shia militias (Tasnim, August 8).



**The meeting of the secretary of the Iranian Supreme National Security Council with the commander of the Popular Mobilization Units. (ILNA, August 7)**

▶ On August 10, the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fuad Hussein, arrived for a visit in Iran and met with senior Iranian officials, chief among them President Ebrahim Raisi; the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani; and the outgoing Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohammad Javad Zarif. During the visit, the minister handed President Raisi an invitation to take part in a regional summit, which will be attended by leaders of countries such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, along with the French president, to discuss security and political matters. The summit, organized by Iraq, is set to be held in Baghdad in late August (Fars, August 10).



**The meeting between the Iranian president and Iraqi minister of foreign affairs. (Fars, August 10)**

► The Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad, Iraj Masjedi, claimed that Iran does not support any party, group or individual in the upcoming parliamentary elections in Iraq, set for October 10. He insisted that Iran has always supported Iran's national unity and cooperation between all the parties and political currents in the country. Masjedi added that the frequent visits of Iraqi officials in Iran are an indication of the breadth of relations that Iran has with all parties, groups and sects in Iraq. He stressed that not only does Iran not support a specific candidate, but it is also working to prevent any interference in the election process (Tasnim, August 16).



**The Iranian Ambassador to Iraq, Iraj Masjedi. (Tasnim, August 16)**

► On August 17, the President of Iran, Raisi, spoke on the phone with the Iraqi Prime Minister, Mustafa al-Kazimi. Raisi thanked al-Kazimi for the invitation to attend the summit of regional countries to be held in Baghdad and congratulated him for the initiative. He stressed that only the countries of the region can make decisions concerning the fate of the region.

Raisi called to accelerate the implementation of joint projects of the two countries, including the laying of the railway connecting Shalamcheh in southwestern Iran to Basra in southern Iraq. He added that enacting the agreements and joint projects will assist in expanding the economic and trade ties between the two countries. In addition, Raisi thanked Iraq for hosting the Iranian pilgrims traveling to Shia holy sites in Iraq and expressed hope that after the COVID-19 pandemic subsides, it will be possible to increase the number of pilgrims. Al-Kazimi congratulated Raisi for assuming his position as the president of Iran and wished him success in his role (ISNA, August 17).

## Iranian Involvement in the Palestinian Arena

► On August 6, the President of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, met with the Head of Hamas' Politburo, Ismail Haniyeh, who arrived in Tehran to take part in the swearing-in ceremony of the president-elect. Raisi stated in the meeting that the last conflagration between Israel and the Palestinians in Gaza proved that the initiative is in the hands of the "resistance" and that it can win the campaign against the "Zionist enemy." He added that the fighters and the "resistance" will be the ones deciding the fate of Palestine and the region. Raisi stressed that Iran has always supported the Palestinian fighters and never had doubts about this policy (the website of Iran's Islamic Broadcasting Authority, August 6). Raisi also met with the Secretary General of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Ziad al-Nakhleh, who also traveled to Tehran to attend the swearing-in ceremony. Raisi declared in the meeting that "resistance" is the only way to defeat "the Zionists." He remarked that "the Zionist regime" has not abided by any of the agreements it has signed, and those who seek to normalize relations with this regime will soon realize their mistake (Fars, August 6). During their visit to Tehran, Haniyeh and Nakhleh also met with the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, and the Commander of the IRGC, Hossein Salami, who stressed Iran's support for the Palestinians. Salami congratulated the Palestinian commanders for the victories of the "Palestinian resistance" during the last Gaza escalatory round. He asserted that only force can reign in the "wayward Zionists" and that bolstering Palestine is a strategy and pattern that must not cease (Tasnim, August 7, August 9; al-Mayadeen, August 9).



**The meeting between Iranian President Raisi and Ismail Haniyeh.  
(Iranian Broadcasting Authority's website, August 6)**

► In an interview, Ziad al-Nakhleh addressed the assistance provided by Iran to the Palestinian factions. According to al-Nakhleh, if Iran assists the PIJ with one cent, Hamas receives ten times that. He denied the claim that the organization that he heads belongs to Iran. According to him, he sees Iran as a strong Muslim country that is able to take on the United States. He added that it does not matter whether the support to the Palestinian people comes from Sunni or a Shia source. Al-Nakhleh also criticized the Sunni regimes for not backing the Palestinians, financially or politically (Araby 21, August 2).