



Spotlight on Iran

June 23, 2022 – July 7, 2022

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Overview

- ▶ On July 2, the Iranian minister of foreign affairs arrived for a visit in Syria and met with senior regime officials, chief among them President Assad. The visit occurred against the backdrop of growing concerns in Damascus and Tehran due to a possible Turkish incursion in northern Syria. Prior to his visit to Damascus, the Iranian minister of foreign affairs traveled to Ankara and met with the Turkish president and Turkish minister of foreign affairs and declared that Iran supports a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Syria and opposes any military action in its territory. During his visit to Damascus, the Iranian minister of foreign affairs condemned the ongoing Israeli strikes in Syria and stressed his country's commitment to continue supporting Syria. He also met with the chiefs of Palestinian factions based in Damascus.
- ▶ In early July, another Iranian oil tanker arrived at Syria's shores. In mid-June, two Iranian tankers docked off Syria's coast following an agreement reached during the visit of President Assad to Tehran in May 2022 concerning the Iranian credit line to Syria. This agreement allowed for the resumption of the supply of oil from Iran to Syria.
- ▶ On June 26, the Iraqi prime minister arrived for a visit in Tehran as part of his effort to resume the Iranian-Saudi rapprochement talks. In his meeting with the prime minister, the Iranian President Raisi stated that his country strives to expand its ties with Saudi Arabia. Raisi also condemned the decision of some of the region's leaders to normalize relations with Israel.
- ▶ In early July, the head of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU, the umbrella organization for Iraq's Shia militias) arrived for a visit in Tehran. At the same time, the speaker of the Iraqi parliament met with the incoming Iranian ambassador to Baghdad and discussed political developments in Iraq and the region.

► Following the devastating earthquake that affected eastern Afghanistan between June 21-22, Iran dispatched planes carrying humanitarian assistance to the victims of the natural disaster.

Iranian Involvement in Syria

► On June 27, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, declared at a joint press conference held in Ankara with the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlüt Cavuşoğlu, that Iran understands Turkey's security concerns in Syria. Addressing the possibility of another Turkish military incursion in Syria, Abdollahian declared that he discussed the issue at length with his Turkish counterpart, and that Iran believes that Turkey's concerns ought to be addressed through negotiations (ISNA, June 27). In his conversation with the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdollahian stressed that Iran supports a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Syria, and that any military actions should be avoided (Mehr, June 28). In response to the statements made by Abdollahian during his meeting with the Turkish minister of foreign affairs, the Iranian Ambassador to Ankara, Mohammad Farazmand, clarified that the remarks of the Iranian minister of foreign affairs should not be seen as a green light from Tehran to Turkish military action in northern Syria, and that Iran's position on the matter has remained clear and unchanged (Tasnim, June 28).

► On July 2, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, arrived for visit in Syria. Upon his arrival to Syria, the foreign minister declared that Iran understands Turkey's concerns, but opposes any military action on Syrian territory. He added that Iran is working to reach a diplomatic solution to the disagreement between Damascus and Ankara. Additionally, Abdollahian condemned the ongoing Israeli strikes in Syria.

► In his meeting with the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Faisal Mekdad, Abdollahian declared that the relationship between the two countries is strategic and stressed his country's commitment to continue support Syria and "the resistance" to ensure the security of the region. The Syrian minister of foreign affairs thanked his Iranian counterpart for Iran's efforts to help solve the disagreement between Syria and Turkey in light of Ankara's intention to carry out another military incursion into northern Syria. In his meeting with President Bashar al-Assad, Abdollahian condemned the lack of response from Western countries to the ongoing Israeli airstrikes in Syria and commented that this attests to their lack of interest in Syria's stability and security. He stressed the need to preserve Syria's territorial integrity and

Iran's opposition to any military action on Syrian land. President Assad thanked Iran for its efforts to promote a political solution to the crisis in his country and added that the power balance in the region is shifting in Syria's favor (Fars, July 2).



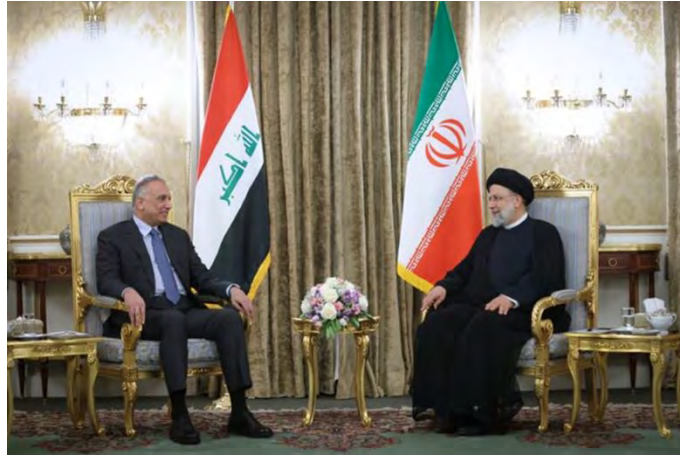
The meeting of the Iranian minister of foreign affairs with the president of Syria. (Fars, July 2)

► In early July, an Iranian oil tanker docked at Syria's Baniyas Port in the country's northwest. This is the third oil tanker that has reached Syria's shores since the resumption of the movement of oil tankers from Iran to Syria (ISNA, July 3). In mid-June 2022, the Syrians pro-regime newspaper al-Watan reported about the arrival of two Iranian tankers carrying about two million barrels of oil to Syria, following an agreement reached during the most recent visit of President Assad to Tehran, conducted in May 2022. The paper reported that the resumption of the supply of oil from Iran to Syria was made possible after the two countries' leaders reached an agreement concerning the Iranian credit line to Syria.

Iranian Involvement in Iraq

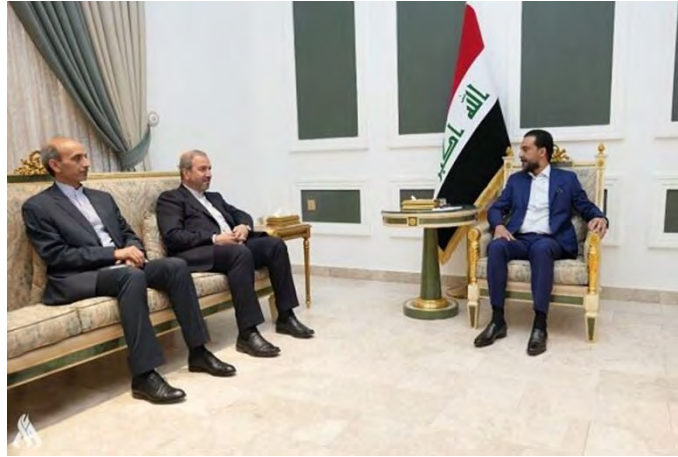
► On June 26, the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mustafa al-Kazimi, arrived for a visit to Tehran as part of his efforts to restart the rapprochement talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Prior to this, Kazemi visited Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. During the joint press conference with the Iraqi prime minister, the President of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, declared that Iran's relations with Iraq are deep and that the Iraqi people are the closest people to the Iranian one. He expressed Iran's desire to continue deepening relations in all spheres. Raisi remarked that he spoke to Kazemi about facilitating the implementation of the project to lay a railway connecting Shalamcheh in western Iran to Basra in southern Iraq. He added that dialogue between Middle Eastern leaders is essential for solving the problems of the region, and that intervention of foreigners in the region only generates problems. Additionally, the Iranian

president addressed the normalization of relations between Israel and a number of Arab countries, declaring that normalizing with “the Zionist regime” will not solve the problems of the region, and that Israel’s steps toward normalization with several countries will not bring it stability and security (ISNA, June 26).



The meeting of the Iraqi prime minister with the president of Iran. (ISNA, June 26)

- ▶ Iraqi sources reported that Faleh al-Fayyad, the head of the Popular Mobilization Units (the umbrella organization of the Shia Iraqi militias) arrived for a visit in Tehran in early July. No details were given concerning the focus on the visit (Shafaqna.com, July 3).
- ▶ On July 5, the Iraqi Speaker of Parliament, Mohamed al-Halbousi, met with the Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad, Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadegh. The press release by the speaker of the Iraqi parliament stated that al-Halbousi wished success to the new ambassador and discussed ways to bolster cooperation between the two countries in various spheres. Additionally, the two discussed recent political developments in Iraq and the region (Mehr, July 5).



**The meeting of the Iraqi speaker of parliament with the Iranian ambassador to Baghdad.
(Mehr, July 5)**

► On July 5, the Iranian Deputy Minister of Interior for Security Affairs, Seyyed Majid Mirahmadi, arrived for a two-day visit in Iraq at the help of a delegation made up of high-ranking political, security and military officials. The Iranian delegation met with senior Iraqi officials, chief among them the Iraqi minister of interior and the commander of the Baghdad Police and discussed ways to expand security cooperation between the two countries, and preparations for the pilgrimage to the Shia holy sites in Iraq as part of the Arbaeen, the day marking the 40th day after the Ashouraa' Fast. During the visit, the countries signed two memoranda of understanding concerning security cooperation between the two countries when it comes to moving goods through joint border crossings, and the movement of pilgrims (ILNA, July 5).

Iranian Involvement in the Palestinian Arena

► On July 3, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, met in Damascus with representatives of the Palestinian factions present in Syria, and stressed Iran's unyielding support for the Palestinian cause. During the meeting, the Iranian minister of foreign affairs declared that the Palestinian cause is the most important cause for the entire Muslim world, and that Iran's support for the resistance of the Palestinian people will persist until the liberation of the homeland of the Palestinian people, and the establishment of a Palestinian state whose capital is Jerusalem. He condemned the willingness of some of the countries of the Middle East to normalize relations with Israel, proclaiming that this is a betrayal of the Palestinian cause. Abdollahian added that "the Zionist regime" is weak and deeply embarrassed in the face of the "resistance axis" and is therefore trying to deflect

public opinion through lies and exaggerations. He added that Iran does not differentiate between Sunni and Shia Muslims and supports both Sunni Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Shia Hezbollah (ISNA, July 3).



The meeting of the Iranian minister of foreign affairs with representatives of the Palestinian factions in Damascus. (ISNA, July 3)

Iranian Involvement in Afghanistan

► On June 23, two airplanes carrying humanitarian assistance from Iran landed at the Khost airport in southeastern Afghanistan. The assistance was sent to survivors of the earthquake that rocked eastern Afghanistan on June 21-22, and included tents and food baskets (ISNA, June 23).



**Iranian humanitarian assistance to survivors of the earthquake in eastern Afghanistan.
(ISNA, June 23)**

► In late June, a delegation of the Taliban arrived for a conference of the Joint Iranian-Afghan Supreme Borders Committee. The delegations, led by Molavi Sa’dollah Balouch, the head of the Department for Security Cooperation and Border Issues at the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, included representatives from the Taliban’s ministries of defense, foreign affairs, energy, water, interior, and the tribal and border affairs. The representatives of the Taliban discussed with Iranian officials the border disputes between the two countries and combatting illegal groups, including drug smugglers and human traffickers, which are operating along the countries’ shared border (Fars, June 29).



The gathering of the Joint Iranian-Afghan Borders Committee. (Fars, June 29)

► On July 5, the Iranian Deputy Ambassador to Kabul, Seyyed Hassan Mortazavi, met with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Taliban, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, and discussed expanding Iranian-Afghan ties. The senior Taliban official thanked the Iranian deputy ambassador to the support Iran has offered the Afghan people and called for solving the problems concerning Afghan migrants in Iran. Additionally, the deputy ambassador met

with the former Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, who thanked him for the Iranian assistance to the survivors of the earthquake in Khost (Fars, July 5).



The meeting between the Iranian deputy ambassador to Kabul with the Taliban's deputy foreign minister. (Fars, July 5)