



Spotlight on Iran

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Author: Dr. Raz Zimmt

Overview

- ▶ In light of the ongoing protests in Iran, the Syrian regime voiced its support for Tehran. In a meeting with the Iranian ambassador to Damascus, the Syrian foreign minister declared that his country stands by the Iranian government and opposes any meddling in the country's domestic affairs.
- ▶ In early October, the Iranian minister of transportation and urban development visited Syria and met with senior government officials to discuss deepening cooperation in the sectors of construction and transportation. Nonetheless, a senior Iranian official in the construction sector stated, in light of the visit, that no progress has been made in executing joint projects between Iran and Syria in this sphere. He added that the previously proposed plans, under which Iranian firms would construct housing units in Syria, have not been initiated.
- ▶ A Syrian opposition-aligned news outlet report on the assignment of a new Iranian commander in charge of the Iran-backed militias operation in the area of Albu Kamal in eastern Syria.
- ▶ The website Noor News, which is affiliated with the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, presented the agreement concerning the maritime border between Israel and Lebanon as “another victory of the resistance,” and claimed that the process of negotiating the agreement proved Hezbollah's capability to secure Lebanon's interests.
- ▶ Iran welcomed the election of Abdul Latif Rashid and Iraq's incoming president, after a political deadlock that lasted for over a year. A few days after his election, the incoming Iraqi president met with the Iranian ambassador to Baghdad. The president declared that Iraq sees Iran as a partner in advancing the joint interests of both countries.

► In mid-October, an Iraqi delegation headed by the national security adviser paid a visit to Tehran to discuss the ongoing Iranian strikes on the Kurdistan region in northern Iraq. In a meeting with the Iraqi adviser, the Iranian foreign minister demanded that Baghdad and the leadership of the Kurdistan region act against the “terrorists” operating in the area.

Iranian Involvement in Syria and Lebanon

► On October 5, Iranian Minister of Transportation and Urban Development, Rostam Ghasemi, arrived for a two-day visit in Syria. During the visit, he met with the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, the Prime Minister, Hussein Arnous, and with the ministers of housing, and economy and foreign trade, and discussed expanding cooperation between the two countries in the sectors of construction, housing, and transportation. The Syrian Minister of Housing and Public Works, Suhail Abdullatif, declared during the meeting with Ghasemi that the two countries intend to establish joint construction companies and initiate public housing projects. In his meeting with the Syrian Minister of Transportation, Zouhair Khazim, the two sides discussed promoting joint ground transportation projects (including laying railways), as well as maritime transport and aviation (IRNA, October 5-6).



The meeting between the Iranian minister of transportation and urban development and President Assad. (IRNA, October 6)

► In light of the visit of the Iranian minister of transportation and urban developments in Syria, the Executive Director of the Association of Builders of Tehran Province, Iraj Rahbar, revealed that no progress has been made in executing joint construction projects agreed upon by Syria and Iran. In an interview with the ILNA news agency (October 10), Rahbar describes the multiple challenges that are preventing the implementation of plans previously made to construct 20,000 housing units in Syria by Iranian companies. He remarked that one of the main challenges is Syria’s refusal to provide written guarantees to Iran concerning

these plans, which attests to Damascus' lack of interest in allowing Iranian companies to participate in reconstruction projects in the country. Other problems are related to economic sanctions placed on both countries, which are preventing the transfer of money between the two countries, as well as Iran's non-conformity to regulations set by the international Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which combats money laundering and terrorism financing. Finally, another challenge is related to difficulties in arranging the transfer of construction materials from Iran to Syria via the Lattakia Port.

► On October 13, the Iranian Ambassador to Syria, Mehdi Sobhani, met with the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Faysal Mekdad. In light of the ongoing protests in Iran, Mekdad declared that his country stands by the Supreme Leader, government and people of Iran, and opposes any foreign meddling in Iran's domestic affairs (ISNA, October 14).



The meeting of the Syrian minister of foreign affairs with the Iranian ambassador to Damascus. (ISNA, October 14)

► The Syrian pro-opposition Syrian news outlet, Sada al-Sharqiya, reported (October 6) that al-Hajj Hussein was appointed as the commander of the pro-Iranian militias operating in the Albu Kamal region in eastern Syria, replacing al-Hajj Askar. According to this report, the new Iranian commander served in several positions in Deir Ezzor governorate, including the deputy commander of all Iranian-backed militias in the region, and the commander of training camps in the area.

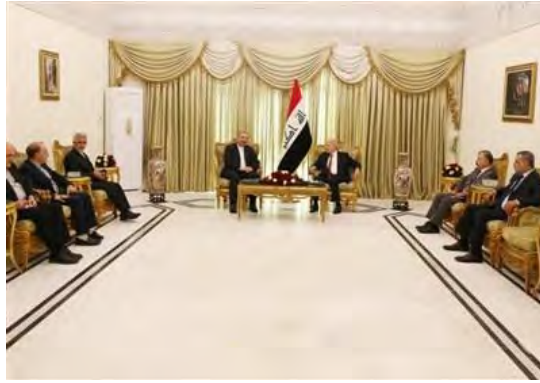


Al-Hajj Yassin (marked in the photo). (Sada al-Sharqiya, October 6)

► The website Nour News, which is politically aligned with the Iranian Supreme National Security Council, presented the agreement delineating the maritime border between Israel and Lebanon as “another victory of the resistance.” A commentary published by the website (October 14) argued that the process of negotiating the agreement proved, once again, the ability of the “resistance” in Lebanon to ensure the interests of that country. The uncompromising positions of Hezbollah forced “the Zionist regime” to recognize Lebanon’s historical rights, and its professional – but powerful – conduct, provided the strongest backing to the Lebanese government during the process of negotiating the border and the rights of the Lebanese people, the author claimed.

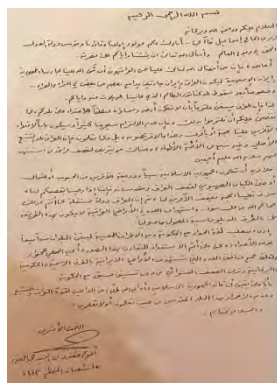
Iranian Involvement in Iraq

► The President of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, congratulated Abdul Latif Rashid, for being elected to the position of Iraq’s president. In a letter to the president-elect, the president of Iran expressed hope that the new government in Iraq will lead the country to prosperity and growth, and deepening ties with Iran. In the letter, Raisi claimed that Iran has always supported a political process based on popular voting and worked to expand the brotherly ties with Iraq. He wished success to the new president in his future role (ISNA, October 13). On October 13, the Kurdish politician Abdul Latif Rashid, was elected as the president of Iraq by the Iraqi parliament. Rashid then tasked Mohammed Shia’ al-Sudani with forming the next government. On October 16, the Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad, Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadegh, met with the new president. The ambassador congratulated Rashid for being elected as president, and stressed Iran’s support for Iraq’s territorial integrity and stability. The incoming president declared that Iraq sees Iran as a partner in furthering the interests of both countries (ISNA, October 16).



The meeting of the Iranian ambassador to Baghdad with the incoming Iraqi president. (Tasnim, October 16)

► On October 7, Iraqi sources published the content of the letter sent by the leader of the Sadrist Current, Muqtada al-Sadr, to the Commander of the Qods Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), Esmail Qa’ani. In the letter, sent on March 18, 2022, Sadr warned Qa’ani of the consequences of the ongoing Iranian strikes on the Kurdistan region in northern Iraq. The letter was sent after Iran launched missiles at Erbil on the night between March 12-13, 2022. The IRGC claimed responsibility for the strikes on a “Zionist base” in the Kurdistan region. In his letter, Sadr declared that Iraq is committed to preventing the use of its territory to orchestrate attacks against Iran. Sadr added that the violation of Iraqi sovereignty by Iran may greatly embarrass Iraq, and provide justification to other countries, whether north of south of Iraq, including “the Zionist regime” to attack Iraq and the Shia holy sites in the country. He warned that if Iraq continues to allow Iran to strike its territory, it may be used as pretext by others to attack Iraq too. Sadr voiced his willingness to promote dialogue between the two countries to bring about the closure of “bases of the enemy” being used against Iran (ISNA, October 8).



The letter of Muqtada al-Sadr to Esmail Qa’ani. (ISNA, October 8)

► The timing of the publication of the letter is likely related to the missile and drone strikes Iran has recently carried out against targets related to the Kurdish-Iranian opposition based

in northern Iraq. The Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned these strikes, which were carried out after the outbreak of wave of protests in Iran. The protests erupted following the death in custody of the Kurdish-Iranian young woman Mahsa Jîna Amini in mid-September.

► On October 15, a delegation headed by the Iraqi National Security Adviser, Qasim al-Araji, arrived for a visit in Tehran to discuss the Iranian strikes on the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq. Rebar Ahmed, the Minister of Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government, was one of the members of the delegation. During the visit, the delegation met with the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hossein Amir Abdollahian. Abdollahian insisted before members of the delegation that Iraq must act against the “terrorists” operating in the Kurdistan region. He claimed that Iran supports a free and independent Iraq but will not tolerate the continued presence of “terrorists” in Iraqi Kurdistan, and their activities against Iran’s national security (Tasnim, October 15). On October 11, the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fuad Hussein, met with the members of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Iraqi Parliament, and declared that Iraq will submit a letter of protest to the UN concerning the Iranian strikes, and will demand an end to the violations of its sovereignty by Iran and Turkey. Meanwhile, the Spokesman of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nasser Kanani, stated in his weekly press conference that Iran was forced to strike northern Iraq after all its appeals to Iraqi authorities concerning the ongoing activity of “terrorist groups” operating in the region were ignored. He stressed that Iran respects Iraq’s sovereignty and territory integrity but expects that Iraq will not allow its territory to be used to harm Iran’s national security (ISNA, October 12).

► On October 14, the Iraqi Ambassador to Iraq, Mohammed Kazem Al-e Sadegh, met with the chiefs of the Dulaym tribe, one of the major Bedouin tribes residing in al-Anbar, western Iraq. In a tweet on his twitter account (October 14), the ambassador thanked the tribal chiefs for the welcome he received and remarked that he found the tribal chiefs to be determined to present unity among Muslims. The visit of the ambassador was held during the “Week of Islamic Unity,” which is marked in Iran between the two dates of birth of Prophet Muhammad, one according to the Sunni tradition and the second according to the Shia one.



**The visit of the Iranian ambassador in Iraq to al-Anbar province.
(Twitter account of the ambassador, October 14)**