



Iran stresses the continued cohesion of the “resistance front” with its support following the deaths of the senior Iranian officials

June 6, 2024

Dr. Raz Zimmt

Highlights

- ▶The deaths of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Iranian Foreign Minister Amir Hossein Abdollahian in a helicopter crash in northwestern Iran on May 19, 2024, provided the Islamic Republic and its regional proxies with an opportunity to demonstrate the cohesion of the “resistance front,” emphasize Tehran’s continued adherence to its strategy of supporting the pro-Iranian axis, and present continuity of its regional policy despite the sudden political upheaval.
- ▶Although Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei holds most of the powers of running the country and determines the Islamic Republic’s overall strategy, the president, the Supreme National Security Council, and the government he heads have influence over the decision-making process, including foreign issues. Over the past three years, President Raisi and Foreign Minister Abdollahian demonstrated considerable involvement in implementing Iranian foreign policy, including regional policy.
- ▶This involvement had been particularly evident since the outbreak of the war in the Gaza Strip in October 2023, amid the Iranian-led regional campaign. The campaign included the military and operative management of the “resistance front”’s components led by the IRGC’s Qods Force, concurrently with political-diplomatic efforts led by President Raisi and Foreign Minister Abdollahian.
- ▶Following the deaths of Raisi and Abdollahian, the Iranian media highlighted their contribution to the “resistance front” over the years, especially since the outbreak of the campaign in the Gaza Strip. In addition, the Iranian media covered the expressions of sorrow on the part of members of the “resistance axis” in the region.
- ▶Senior Iranian officials and commentators stressed that the deaths of the president and foreign minister would not bring about any change in Iran’s policy of supporting its proxies, a message that was also conveyed in meetings between representatives of the “resistance

front” and Iranian officials in Tehran. There is also a growing effort on the part of Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri-Kani to continue advancing the political-diplomatic campaign led by Abdollahian. In addition, the deaths of the two senior officials were exploited to highlight the centrality of the Qods Force in leading the Iranian network of proxies. This effort was clearly evident in a meeting between representatives of the “resistance front” and senior IRGC officials on the sidelines of Raisi’s funeral in Tehran.



President Raisi and Foreign Minister Abdollahian (Asr-e Iran, May 21, 2024)

►The reactions in Iran to the deaths of Raisi and Abdollahian reflect the determination of the regime in Tehran to maintain its policy of support for the Iranian network of proxies and to continue promoting the concept of “convergence of arenas” in view of the ongoing campaign in the Gaza Strip. The absence of the senior Iranian officials may limit Iran’s ability to lead its political-diplomatic efforts in the region to some extent, especially in light of Abdollahian’s professional skills, experience, and good relations with the Qods Force, which enabled him to operate with a great deal of coordination and cooperation with the commander of the force. The identity of the new president and foreign minister following the presidential elections scheduled for June 28, 2024, could have some impact on Iranian policy, including foreign policy, as well as on the reciprocal relations between the government and the Foreign Ministry and the other centers of power in Iran, including the Revolutionary Guards. These influences depend on their worldview, experience, and network of contacts inside and outside Iran.

►**However, the Islamic Republic’s continued commitment to the parties comprising the “resistance front,” its basic hostility towards Israel and the United States, and its unconditional support for the Palestinian cause do not depend on the identity of the president and foreign minister. Moreover, Iran’s involvement in the Middle East and the operation of its network of proxies is managed and concentrated mainly by the Revolutionary Guards and the Qods Force, which are subordinate to the Supreme Leader. The IRGC’s growing influence in Iran’s political system since the early 1990s, the**

strengthening of hardliners' hegemony in all centers of power in Iran, and the empowerment of radical attitude at the top of the regime in recent years ensure the continuation of Iran's current regional policy for the foreseeable future.

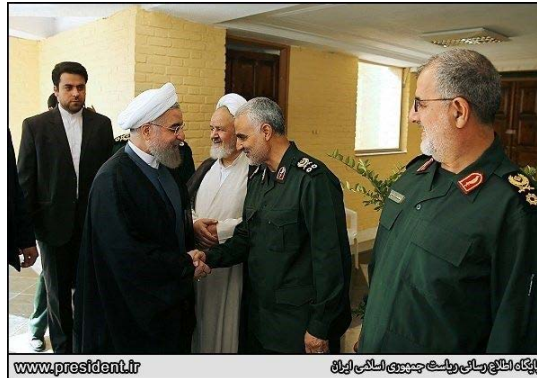
Iran's political system and regional foreign policy

► Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran's political system has been characterized by complexity stemming from the existence of two parallel political systems: one comprising publicly elected institutions, headed by the president and parliament (Majles), and another, the Islamic revolutionary system, comprising institutions established after the revolution that are not elected by the public, headed by the Supreme Leader. The ability of elected institutions to operate depends to a large extent on the space allowed by the Islamic revolutionary system. The elected institutions are in fact obligated to act in accordance with an overall strategy set by the Supreme Leader. According to Iran's constitution, the president of Iran, who is the head of the executive branch, holds the second most important position in the regime's hierarchy, after the Supreme Leader. He heads the government, shapes its policy, and is responsible for its implementation. In addition, he chairs the Supreme National Security Council. While the president's powers over domestic and economic affairs are quite extensive, foreign policy decisions are traditionally considered the authority of the Supreme Leader.¹

► One of the most striking features of Iran's political system is the institutional duplication between different centers of power. This duplication allows the leader to encourage competition between different bodies with overlapping responsibilities. Thus, for example, the Iranian armed forces are characterized by duplication and a certain degree of overlap between the regular army and the Revolutionary Guards, although these two bodies are directly subordinate to the Supreme Leader of Iran. Iran's intelligence apparatus is also characterized by power struggles, mainly between the IRGC's Intelligence Organization, which is subordinate to the Supreme Leader, and the Ministry of Intelligence, which is subordinate to the president, although the president's appointment of the intelligence minister is subject to the Supreme Leader's approval. The duplication of responsibility

¹ For further information on Iran's political system, see: Raz Zimmt, *Iran From Within: State and Society in the Islamic Republic* (Tel Aviv, 2022; in Hebrew).

between the Intelligence Ministry and the Revolutionary Guards Intelligence Organization has created disagreements and prestige struggles between the two bodies over the years.²



Former President Hassan Rowhani shakes hands with former Qods Force commander Qassem Soleimani (Iranian president’s website, September 15, 2015)

► This institutional duplicity is also clearly expressed in the involvement of institutions with parallel powers in formulating and executing foreign policy. It is intended to preserve the decision-making power on Iran’s foreign policy strategy in the hands of the Supreme Leader, who is assisted by a small panel of advisors, including by his senior advisor on international affairs, and by the Supreme National Security Council. According to Iran’s constitution, the Supreme National Security Council is responsible for setting defense and national security policy within the framework of the overall policy set by the Supreme Leader. In addition to the president, the Council officially includes the ministers of foreign affairs, interior, and intelligence, commanders of the Revolutionary Guards and the regular army, heads of the legislative and judicial branches, and two personal representatives of the Supreme Leader. The Foreign Ministry, which is subordinate to the president, may make certain foreign policy decisions, but on key issues, it must report to the president, who then decides whether a decision on these matters requires the approval of the government or the Supreme National Security Council. After a decision is made in the Council, the President sends it to the Supreme Leader for approval, and if such approval is granted, the decision is passed on to the relevant institutions.

► The institutional duplication in foreign policy is particularly prominent in Iran’s regional policy due to the involvement of the Revolutionary Guards, particularly the Qods Force, in the regional arena. In an August 2017 interview, Hossein Jaber Ansari, deputy foreign minister for

² In this context, see the study of the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC) from November 11, 2020, “[The Intelligence Organization of the IRGC: A Major Iranian Intelligence Apparatus](#)”

Arab-African affairs, discussed the reciprocal relations between the Foreign Ministry and the Qods Force in managing Iran's regional policy. He tried to downplay the significance of institutional duplication, arguing that, like other countries, Iran also has various institutions that influence foreign policy. He said all the bodies in Iran involved in conducting regional foreign policy were operating in accordance with common principles and a single strategy determined by the Supreme National Security Council, and that they were fully and daily coordinated on regional issues (Iranian Diplomacy website, August 9, 2017). Despite that, it is impossible to ignore the rivalries and tensions that existed between these two bodies over the years, especially during the previous government headed by President Hassan Rowhani, who was identified with the more moderate wing of Iranian politics. The tension between the Iranian Foreign Ministry and the IRGC's Qods Force can be found in former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif's resignation announcement at the end of February 2019, after he was excluded from the visit of Syrian President Bashar Assad, who arrived in Tehran on February 25, 2019, for the first time since the outbreak of the civil war in Syria. Zarif eventually remained in office. Esmail Qaani, then Qods Force commander Qassem Soleimani's deputy, said after the visit that President Assad had been brought to Tehran by the Qods Force and with the knowledge of President Hassan Rowhani, who had not informed the foreign minister (ISNA, March 6, 2019). An interview given by Zarif in January 2021 to the reformist daily E'temad (January 23, 2021) opened another window into the complex relationship between the Foreign Ministry and the Qods Force. In the interview, Zarif admitted that he had to settle for only a limited role regarding his country's regional foreign policy.



**Former Foreign Minister Zarif with former Qods Force commander Soleimani
(ISNA, August 6, 2019)**

The president's and foreign minister's involvement in the Iranian political campaign since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip

► Since the outbreak of war in the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023, Iran has been leading a comprehensive military and political-diplomatic campaign to enlist support for Hamas and end the fighting to preserve as much as possible Hamas' ruling and military capabilities. This campaign included the activation of components of the "axis of resistance" led by Qods Force commander Qaani, alongside regional and international diplomatic efforts led by Foreign Minister Abdollahian. The war in the Gaza Strip provided Iran with the first significant opportunity to implement the concept of "convergence of arenas," which includes integrating the components of the pro-Iranian axis in the campaign against Israel in strategic synchronization and with a division of work between the various components of the axis. Activating this concept included partial integration of Hezbollah in the campaign, attacks by pro-Iranian Shiite militias in Iraq against Israel as well as against American bases in Syria and Iraq (until February 2024), and the integration of the Houthis from Yemen in the campaign against Israel, mainly by launching missiles and UAVs at southern Israel, as well as attacking ships in the Red Sea to impose a naval blockade on Israel and bring about international intervention to stop Israel's attacks in the Gaza Strip.³



Foreign Minister Abdollahian and Qods Force commander Qaani (IRNA, May 25, 2024)

The president's involvement

► Since the beginning of the war, President Raisi himself had held consultations with senior figures in the pro-Iranian axis as part of the political efforts to advance Iranian goals in the campaign. In March 2024, Raisi met in Tehran with Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political

³ In this context, see the ITIC's study from November 22, 2023, "Iran, the war in Gaza, and the "convergence of the arenas"

bureau, and stressed Iran’s support for the Palestinians and Hamas (Tasnim, March 27, 2024). On March 28, 2024, Raisi met with Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) secretary-general Ziad al-Nakhalah, saying that the indifference and inaction on the part of some leaders of Muslim countries regarding their duty to the Palestinian people aroused sorrow. He said the residents of the Gaza Strip had challenged the unjust world order, and that anyone who rejected the “Palestinian resistance” was in fact rejecting Palestine’s right to life (Iranian president’s website, March 28, 2024). In mid-April 2024, Raisi spoke with Mahdi al-Mashat, the head of the Houthi Supreme Political Council, and praised Yemen’s support for the Palestinians and Houthi activity aimed at exerting economic pressure on Israel (Khabar Online, April 16, 2024).



Raisi meets with Haniyeh (Iranian president’s website, April 11, 2024)

► Raisi also worked to mobilize Arab and Muslim countries to sever their ties with Israel, especially economic ties. In November 2023, Raisi participated in the emergency summit of Muslim and Arab countries in Riyadh. On the sidelines of the summit, the president met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Emir of Qatar, the presidents of Syria and Egypt, the interim prime minister of Lebanon, and Sudan’s military ruler. In his speech, he presented an initiative of ten sections, including demands for a ceasefire, lifting the siege of the Gaza Strip, sending humanitarian aid, severing political and economic ties between Muslim countries and Israel, designating the IDF as a terrorist organization, establishing an international tribunal to try the “crimes” of Israel and the United States, establishing a fund for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, and arming the Palestinian people in case of continued Israeli attacks. He warned that if the summit did not take practical steps, it would increase frustration among the Muslim peoples, and they might act on their own (ISNA, November 11, 2023).



**President Raisi at the emergency summit of Muslim and Arab countries
(Iranian president's website, November 11, 2023)**

► Raisi also sent letters to 50 world leaders to unite and coordinate efforts to exert pressure on Israel to stop its “crimes” in the Gaza Strip by exerting pressure, including ending commercial and political cooperation with it (Tasnim, November 20, 2023). In January 2024, Raisi met in Ankara with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. At a joint press conference, Raisi said that the Palestinian issue was today the primary concern of the Muslim world and even the entire world. He called for severing economic and political ties with Israel, noting that in his meeting with Erdoğan, there was agreement on supporting Palestinian rights (IRNA, January 24, 2024).

Involvement of the minister of foreign affairs

► Most of Iran’s diplomatic efforts in the region were concentrated in the hands of Foreign Minister Abdollahian, who in recent years, and especially since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, played a central role in leading Iran’s political campaign in the region. He made several rounds of visits to the region, including Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Qatar, during which he met with senior government officials in those countries, with the heads of the Palestinian organizations, led by Ismail Haniyeh, the head of Hamas’ political bureau, and with Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah. Abdollahian also held a long series of telephone conversations with his counterparts in the regional and international arenas, as well as with the heads of Hamas and the PIJ, during which he discussed developments in the region and the Gaza Strip, and participated in conferences of Islamic countries dealing with the war in the Gaza Strip. Abdollahian’s extensive involvement in regional affairs, especially compared to his predecessors, stemmed to a large extent from his professional background, his deep knowledge of the Middle East, his command of Arabic, and his good relations with the IRGC’s Qods Force. Abdollahian, who previously served as deputy foreign minister for Arab-African affairs, ambassador to Bahrain, and member of Iran’s negotiating team with the United States

on Iraq, was considered very close to former Qods Force commander Soleimani and a clear supporter of Iran’s efforts to consolidate its regional influence.



Abdollahian meets with Nasrallah in Beirut (Tasnim, February 10, 2024)

Highlighting the contribution of the president and foreign minister to the “resistance” after their deaths

►Following the deaths of Raisi and Abdollahian, the Iranian media highlighted their contribution to the “resistance front” over the years, especially since the outbreak of the war in the Gaza Strip. For example, on May 24, 2024, the Iranian media released a short video documenting Raisi’s visit to Hezbollah posts in southern Lebanon in 2018 (before he was elected president in the summer of 2021). The video shows Raisi, then head of the Imam Reza Foundation in the city of Mashhad, examining various weapons belonging to Hezbollah, including artillery and anti-tank missiles (Tasnim, May 24, 2024).



President Raisi at a Hezbollah post in southern Lebanon (al-Ahed, May 24, 2024)

►At the end of May 2024, a special conference was held at the University of Tehran to discuss the consequences of the deaths of Raisi and Abdollahian. The conference, organized by the Basij students, entitled “From Service to Martyrdom,” was attended by representatives from

the “resistance front,” including Nasser Abu Sharif, the PIJ representative in Tehran; Hoda Mousawi, the sister of former Hezbollah secretary-general Abbas Mousawi; Sayyid Abbas Mousawi, the political secretary of the Iraqi Nujaba Shiite militia; and Ibrahim al-Dulaimi, the Yemeni government ambassador to Iran. The participants praised Raisi and Abdollahian’s support for the pro-Iranian axis and the Palestinians (Tasnim, May 29, 2024).



Conference in memory of Raisi and Abdollahian at Tehran University (Tasnim, May 29, 2024)

►The Iranian media also highlighted reactions among the parties comprising the “axis of resistance” in Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas, the PIJ, and the pro-Iranian Shiite militias in Iraq and Yemen, who expressed great sorrow over the deaths of the senior Iranian officials and stressed their support for the Palestinian cause and the “resistance” (Mehr, May 19, 2024). In addition, the Iranian media reported public events held in the region to honor the senior Iranian figures who were killed, such as a conference held on behalf of the Arab Writers Association in Syria, where the head of the association, Mohammad Hourani, stressed the contribution of the senior Iranian officials to the “victories of the resistance” (Iranian Broadcasting Authority website, May 29, 2024).



Conference of the Arab Writers Association in Syria in memory of the senior Iranian officials (IRNA, May 30, 2024)

Highlighting the cohesion of the “resistance front” and the continuity of Iranian support

►Senior Iranian officials and commentators stressed that the deaths of the senior Iranian officials are unlikely to bring about any change in Iran’s policy of support for the front. In addition, their deaths were exploited to highlight the centrality of the Qods Force in leading the Iranian network of proxies.

►Already on the sidelines of Raisi’s funeral, a meeting of representatives from the “resistance front” was held in Tehran. The meeting was attended by IRGC commander Hossein Salami, Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani, and representatives of Hamas, the PIJ, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Hezbollah, and the Houthis. The conference participants discussed the situation in the Gaza Strip and the role of the “resistance front,” stressing the need for continued jihad and struggle until a “complete victory” is achieved in the Gaza Strip with the participation of all “resistance groups” in the region. In addition, a meeting was held between elements of the Iraqi Shiite militias and senior IRGC and Qods Force officials (Tasnim; al-Mayadeen, May 23, 2024).



Meeting of representatives of the “resistance front” in Tehran (Tasnim, May 23, 2024)

►On May 22, 2024, Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei met with Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas’ political bureau, who had arrived in Tehran to attend Raisi’s funeral, and assured him that Raisi’s replacement, Mohammad Mokhber, would continue the former president’s policy regarding Palestine in the same spirit and motivation (ISNA, May 22, 2024).



Khamenei meets with Haniyeh (ISNA, May 22, 2024)

►A similar message was conveyed in a telephone conversation Mokhber held with PIJ secretary-general Ziad al-Nakhalah. He said the Iranian strategy, based on support for the “resistance,” especially the Palestinian groups, would not change following the changes in the top echelons of the Iranian government (ISNA, May 26, 2024). In a telephone conversation with Syrian President Bashar Assad, Mokhber said all Iranian institutions were continuing to carry out their missions as in the past and that Iran was committed to continuing its support for the “resistance front,” especially Syria (IRNA, May 23, 2024). On May 30, 2024, Assad visited Tehran to express condolences over the deaths of the senior Iranian officials and met with Iran’s Supreme Leader and the acting president. Mokhber said Iran would follow in President Raisi’s footsteps and stressed its continued support for the “axis of resistance.” The acting president also stressed the need to implement the agreements signed between the countries during Raisi’s visit to Damascus in May 2023 (IRNA, May 30, 2024). Meeting with Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid, who came to Tehran to express condolences over the deaths of the senior Iranian officials, Mokhber said that Raisi had played a significant role in strengthening the “axis of resistance,” and that Iran, led by the Supreme Leader, would continue its regional strategy and policy towards Iraq (ISNA, May 25, 2024).



Iranian Supreme Leader and acting president meet with the president of Syria (IRNA, May 30, 2024)

►Nasser Kanani, the spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, stressed Iran’s continued support for the “resistance front.” At his weekly press conference on May 26, 2024, Kanani said that the deaths of the senior Iranian officials would not lead to any change in Iran’s support for the Palestinians, stressing that support for the “resistance front” and the Palestinians was a policy of principle and a moral obligation for all countries (Fars, May 27, 2024). Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, the secretary of Iran’s Strategic Council for Foreign Relations, also told a conference in Qatar about the war in the Gaza Strip and its implications for the region that Iran’s support for the Palestinians was full and permanent (ISNA, May 26, 2024).

►Iran’s official press stressed the continuation of Iran’s regional policy after the deaths of the officials. The government daily Iran argued in a commentary article that not only did the “resistance front” maintain its steadfastness and unity after their deaths but it would also increase its strength and continue advancing its strategic goals. According to the daily, the issue of the “resistance” is much deeper than the policy of one government or another, and Israel’s continued existence as a regional and destabilizing power will strengthen the “resistance” even after the deaths of the senior officials (Iran, May 27, 2024).

►International affairs commentator Reza Sadr al-Hosseini said Iran would continue its support for the “resistance axis” despite the deaths of Raisi and Abdollahian. He noted that these two senior officials played a central role in supporting the “resistance” and even called Abdollahian “the foreign minister of the resistance.” According to him, support for the “resistance” stems from the Iranian people and the entire Islamic Republic, and therefore there is no doubt that it will continue. According to the commentator, the actions carried out against Israel since the deaths of the senior Iranian officials, including Houthi activity against Israel and Hamas activity in the Gaza Strip, reflect the results of the meeting between senior members of the “resistance front” and IRGC commanders in Tehran, and there is no doubt that the “resistance front” will take additional steps to achieve its goals (IRNA, May 28, 2024).

►On May 29, 2024, the IRGC-affiliated Tasnim News Agency reported that Iran had provided the Houthis in Yemen with technology to develop advanced anti-ship ballistic missiles. According to the report, the transfer of the technology proves that Iran has successfully supported the “resistance front” throughout the region and succeeded in strengthening the “resistance” organizations, and “such a policy has led to the establishment of an integrated command and control center in the region, especially in the spheres of UAVs and missiles.”.

Although the report does not refer to the transfer of weapons carried out after the deaths of the senior Iranian officials, the unusual publication of the report at the current time is possibly intended to indicate Iran's ongoing commitment to its proxies in the region (Tasnim, May 29, 2024).

Promotion of the political-diplomatic campaign by Abdollahian's replacement

►Meanwhile, there is a growing effort on the part of Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri-Kani to continue advancing the political-diplomatic campaign led by Abdollahian. Bagheri is a veteran and experienced Iranian diplomat, but unlike Abdollahian, he is not fluent in Arabic and lacks significant experience in managing Iran's regional foreign policy in the Middle East. He previously served as director-general for Central and Northern European Affairs at the Iranian Foreign Ministry, deputy secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, and head of Iran's negotiating team in talks on renewing the nuclear agreement in 2022, as well as discussions on a prisoner exchange deal with the United States in 2023.

►On the sidelines of the funerals of the senior Iranian officials, Bagheri met with the heads of the Palestinian organizations, including Ismail Haniyeh, PIJ deputy secretary-general Muhammad al-Hindi, and PFLP deputy secretary-general Jamil Mazhar. Bagheri thanked the "resistance" organizations for their solidarity with Iran and praised the "courageous resistance of the Palestinian people against the Zionist regime." He said Iran would invest all its efforts to defend the Palestinian people and stop the "crimes of the Zionist regime" against the Palestinians (Mizan, May 23, 2024). Bagheri also met in Tehran with Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi. At a joint press conference, Bagheri said the two countries had agreed to increase their efforts and cooperation to "stop the crimes in the Gaza Strip" and send humanitarian aid to the residents of the Strip (ISNA, May 27, 2024).



Bagheri meets with the heads of the Palestinian organizations in Tehran (Mizan, May 23, 2024)

► Shortly after assuming the position of acting foreign minister, Bagheri held a series of telephone conversations with his counterparts in the region and around the world. In his conversation with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi, Bagheri stressed the need for a joint effort by Iran, Jordan, and the other Muslim countries to achieve an immediate and full ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and increase support for the Palestinians. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan invited Bagheri to attend the emergency meeting of foreign ministers of D8 (Organization of Developing Countries) member countries in Turkey on the crisis in the Gaza Strip (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, May 21, 2024). Bagheri also spoke with Qatar's prime minister and foreign minister, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman, to discuss bilateral relations and developments in the Gaza Strip. He called for continued cooperation between Muslim countries to protect the Palestinian people, noting that "the Zionists must know that the continuation of the crimes in the Gaza Strip will have a price." They also discussed the proposal to hold a special meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to discuss the latest developments in the Palestinian arena, especially in Rafah (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, June 1, 2024). Bagheri also discussed developments in the Palestinian arena in telephone conversations with the foreign ministers of Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, June 1-2, 2024).

► In early June 2024, Bagheri spoke at a conference in Tehran on the Gaza Strip and stressed Iran's support for the "resistance." He said that support for this stream was no longer limited to Iran alone, and that it had become an important, significant, and stabilizing factor in the region, which no one could remove. He also said that all political, propaganda, and diplomatic means had to be used to support the Palestinians against Israel and its supporters everywhere in the world (ISNA, June 1, 2024).



Ali Bagheri at a conference on Gaza in Tehran (ISNA, June 1, 2024)

► On June 3, 2024, Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri visited Lebanon and Syria, his first visit since the death of Foreign Minister Amir Hossein Abdollahian in the crash of the Iranian president’s helicopter last month. During the visit, Bagheri met with senior Lebanese government officials, including Interim Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib, and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, to discuss regional and Palestinian developments (ISNA, June 3, 2024). At a press conference with the Lebanese foreign minister, Bagheri said the Islamic “resistance” in Lebanon was an anchor of stability and peace in the region. He noted that during his meeting with the Lebanese foreign minister, he discussed developments in the Gaza Strip, especially in Rafah, and agreed that all countries should take joint action to combat “Zionist aggression.” He warned Israel against launching an all-out confrontation with Hezbollah in Lebanon (Tasnim, June 3, 2024).

► During his visit to Beirut, Bagheri also met with Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah to discuss developments in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, as well as with senior figures in the Palestinian organizations, including senior Hamas leader Khalil al-Haya and PIJ secretary-general Ziad al-Nakhalah. Bagheri stressed that Iran would continue to support the “resistance” in the Palestinian territories and the region (al-Alam and IRNA, June 4, 2024).



**Right: Bagheri meets with Nasrallah (Tasnim, June 4, 2024).
Left: Bagheri meets with senior Palestinian factions (al-Alam, June 4, 2024)**



►After he visited Lebanon, Bagheri continued to Damascus and met with Syrian President Bashar Assad, Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad, and representatives of the Palestinian organizations in Damascus. At a press conference with the Syrian foreign minister, Bagheri said he had come to Syria to consult on the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and Rafah and to formulate a joint strategy to stop “Zionist aggression.” He said his visit conveyed the message that Iran would continue to stand by the “resistance” as in the past (Tasnim, June 4, 2024). Meeting with President Assad, Bagheri said the ties between Iran and Syria would remain deep and strategic because they were based on stable foundations and common interests (ISNA, June 4, 2024).



Bagheri meets with President Assad (ISNA, June 4, 2024)

►In addition to his talks and meetings in the regional and international arenas, on May 28, 2024, Bagheri met with Qods Force commander Qaani, who praised Abdollahian and his support for the “resistance” and the Palestinian people. Bagheri said the “resistance” was not only a steam of struggle against oppression, aggression, and occupation but also a successful model of government (al-Alam, May 28, 2024). Apparently, the purpose of the public meeting was to convey a message of ongoing coordination between the Foreign Ministry and the Qods Force even after Abdollahian’s demise.



Qaani (left) meeting with Bagheri (al-Alam, May 28, 2024)