

# Iran Update



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**April 29, 2024, 2:00 pm ET**

*The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events. Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report. Click [here](#) to subscribe to the Iran Update.*

*CTP-ISW defines the “Axis of Resistance” as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually expelling American influence from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.*

*We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.*

**Hamas is considering a new Egyptian ceasefire proposal that would require Hamas to release 20 to 33 living Israeli hostages.**[1] Egyptian officials reportedly sent Hamas the proposal on April 26 after Egyptian intelligence officials met with the IDF chief of staff and Shin Bet head in Egypt and Israel.[2] Hamas acknowledged that it received the proposal on April 27 and framed it as a “response” to Hamas’ maximalist demands, which have not changed since December 2023. Hamas sent Israel a reiteration of its unchanging, maximalist demands on April 13 after the previous round of negotiations.[3] A Hamas delegation reportedly arrived in Cairo on April 29 to discuss the latest Egyptian proposal. An Israeli delegation is expected to travel to Cairo to continue talks on April 30.[4]

Unspecified Israeli officials stated that the proposal contains several Israeli concessions. This proposal includes an Israeli willingness to discuss a “full return of displaced Palestinians to their homes in

northern Gaza” and the withdrawal of the IDF from the Netzarim corridor that bisects the Gaza Strip.[5] The corridor is the only area in the Gaza Strip where Israeli forces are currently deployed.[6] Axios reported that the first phase of the proposal involves a ceasefire lasting one day for each hostage that Hamas releases.[7] The Israel war cabinet reportedly allowed negotiators to lower the number of hostages demanded after Hamas claimed that it does not have 40 living hostages that are elderly, female, or injured.[8] An unspecified Israeli official said that the war cabinet changed its position due to assessments “that some of the 40 hostages whose release Israel was demanding have died in Hamas captivity.”[9] The proposal also includes provisions for the potential release of “thousands” of Palestinian prisoners, according to British Foreign Secretary David Cameron .[10] The proposal also reportedly contains a second phase that prescribes a “period of sustained calm,” although what exactly that calm would entail is unclear.[11] An anonymous Hamas official told *Agence France-Presse* that Hamas has “no material problems with the current deal proposal” on April 28 .[12]

International mediators have expressed hope that Hamas will accept the proposal. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken described Israel as being “extraordinarily generous” in the proposal and called for Hamas to “make the right decision” and “quickly” on April 29.[13] Egyptian Foreign Affairs Minister Sameh Shoukry said on April 29 that Egypt is “hopeful” about the new truce proposal .[14]

**Palestinian militias threatened to target “foreign forces” deployed into or on the coast of the Gaza Strip.** The secular leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Popular Resistance Committees—both Palestinian groups fighting alongside Hamas in the war—explicitly threatened UK forces in their statements on April 27 and 28, respectively.[15] The BBC reported on April 27 that UK troops may deploy to the Gaza Strip to assist with humanitarian aid distribution.[16] The PFLP statement called for humanitarian aid to be brought into the Gaza Strip through “official crossings” and “under Palestinian management and supervision.”[17] These statements follow Hamas Political Bureau Deputy Chairman Khalil al Hayya’s interview on April 25 during which he implied that Hamas would attack any non-Palestinian presence around the Gaza Strip “at sea or on land.”[18] At least one US Navy vessel is stationed off the coast of the Gaza Strip at the time of this writing.[19]

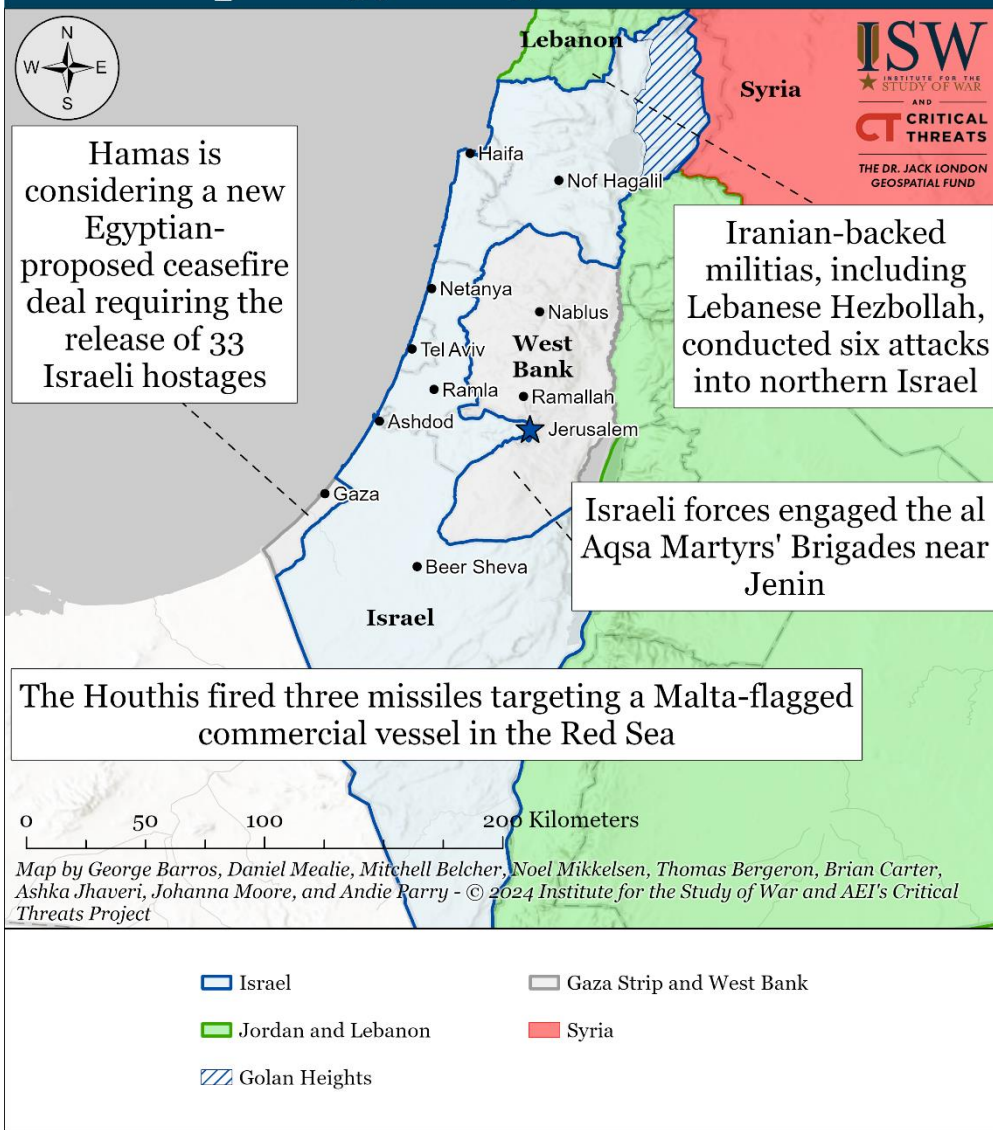
**Iran is hosting an international trade exhibition between April 27 and May 1 as part of its effort to undermine Western sanctions by increasing Iranian exports and economic cooperation with other countries. Delegations from at least 26 countries, including Burkina Faso, North Korea, Russia, and Zimbabwe, attended the exhibition.[20]** The exhibition has showcased Iranian agricultural, electrical, medical, and petrochemical products.[21] Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanani emphasized on April 29 that the Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry invited North Korea to participate in the exhibition.[22] A North Korean economic and political delegation traveled to Tehran on April 23, marking the first North Korean visit to Iran since 2019.[23] Kanani dismissed allegations that the North Korean delegation is visiting Iran to expand military cooperation with Tehran, describing these allegations as “biased speculation” and “baseless.”[24] Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber separately called for expanding economic ties and conducting trade in local currencies during meetings with the vice president of Zimbabwe and the prime minister of Burkina Faso on the sidelines of the exhibition on April 27.[25] Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi previously traveled to Zimbabwe in July 2023 and signed 12 cooperation agreements, including an energy agreement, with Zimbabwean officials.[26]

Iran appears especially focused on possible arms deals with regional and extra-regional actors. Iranian Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Minister Brig. Gen. Mohammad Reza Gharaei Ashtiani discussed military cooperation in separate meetings with his Indian and Kazakh counterparts on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting in Astana on April 26 and 27.[27] Ashtiani separately expressed readiness to increase cooperation with Zimbabwe while meeting Zimbabwean Vice President Constantino Chiwenga in Tehran on April 29.[28] Ashtiani, in his role as defense minister, is primarily responsible for managing arms procurement and sales and the Iranian defense industrial base. Iranian leaders have intensified their efforts in recent years to export military assets in order to generate revenue for the ill-fairing Iranian economy and increasing Iranian influence abroad.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Political Negotiations:** Hamas is considering an Egyptian-proposed ceasefire deal that would have Hamas release 20 to 33 Israeli hostages alive. Western outlets reported the proposal involves new Israeli concessions. Hamas has not changed its maximalist position in the negotiations since December 2023.
- **Iran:** Delegations from Russia, North Korea, and several African countries, among others, have traveled to Tehran for an international trade exhibition. The exhibition is part of the Iranian effort to undermine Western sanctions by increasing Iranian exports and economic cooperation with other countries. Iran remains particularly focused on selling military equipment.
- **Gaza Strip:** The World Central Kitchen announced the resumption of its humanitarian operations in the Gaza Strip. The IDF separately announced the expansion of its humanitarian zone in the southern Gaza Strip.
- **Iraq:** Some Iraqi parliamentarians have backed a motion to designate the US ambassador to Iraq as a persona non grata. The parliamentarians are responding to the ambassador condemning a newly passed law that criminalizes homosexuality in Iraq.
- **Syria:** The Syrian regime reportedly deployed forces to Suwayda Province, as anti-regime activity has continued mounting there. Anti-regime protests have fluctuated across the province since August 2023.

# Israel-Hamas War as of April 29, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



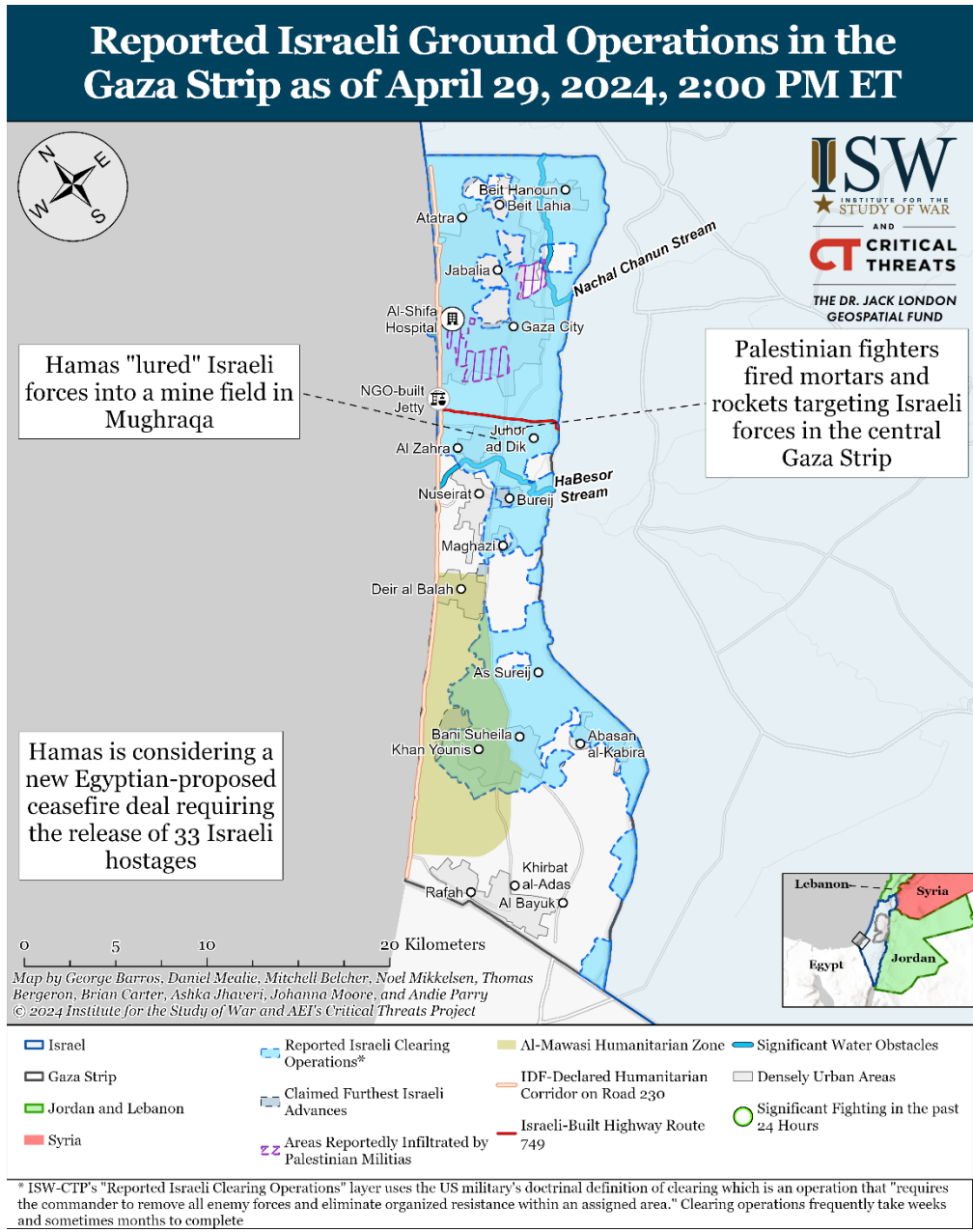
## Gaza Strip

### **Axis of Resistance objectives:**

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to sustain clearing operations in the Gaza Strip
- Reestablish Hamas as the governing authority in the Gaza Strip

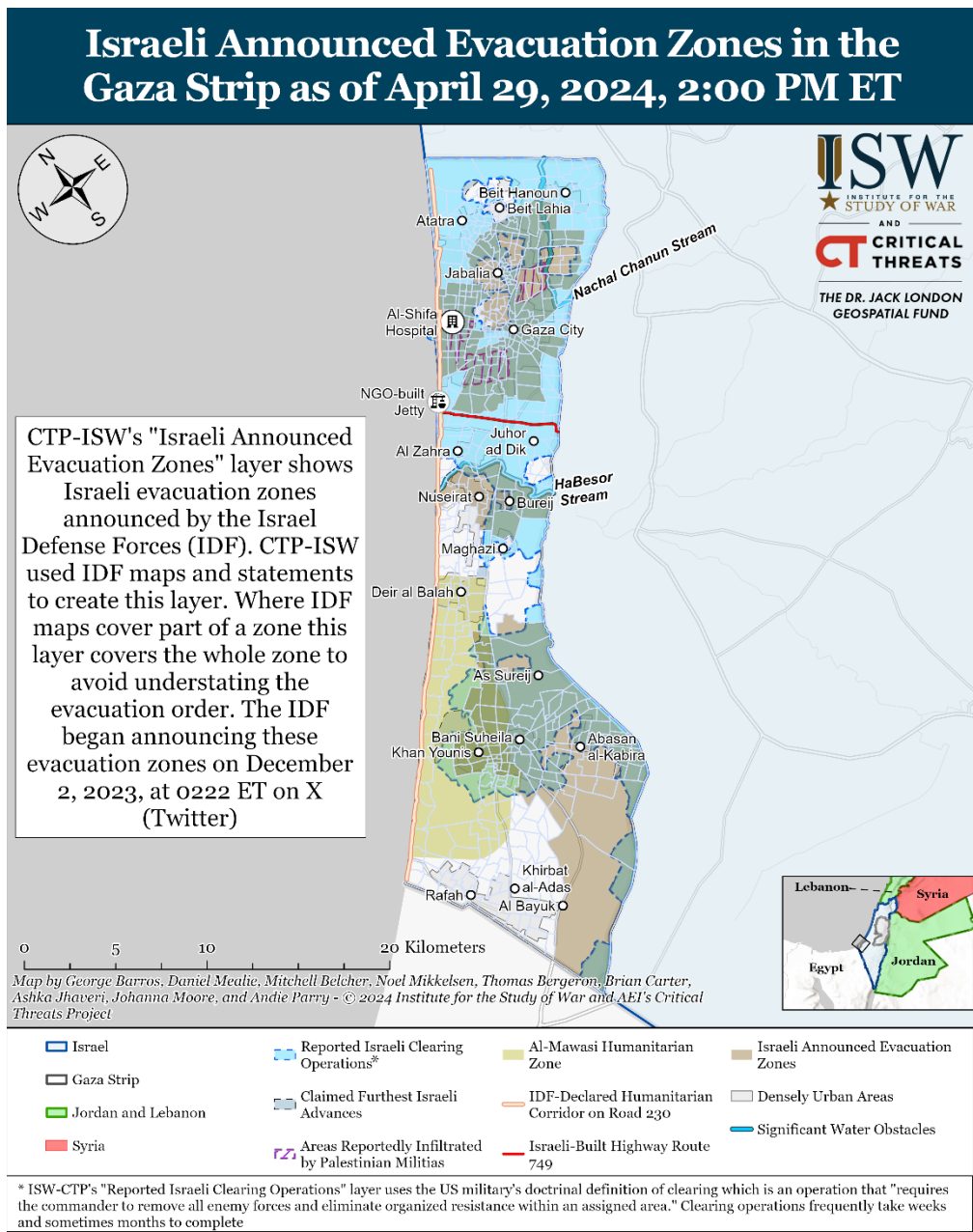
**Local Palestinian sources reported that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Air Force continued to conduct strikes across the Gaza Strip on April 29.** Palestinian sources reported that the IDF Air Force struck targets in Rafah and the central Gaza Strip.<sup>[29]</sup> The IDF has not published a summary of its activities in the Gaza Strip on April 29 at the time of this writing.

**Palestinian militias have continued to target Israeli forces near the Netzarim corridor since CTP-ISW's last information cutoff on April 28.** The IDF 2nd and 679th brigades are deployed to the Netzarim corridor to secure it, facilitate the transfer of humanitarian aid, and conduct targeted raids into the northern and central Gaza Strip.[30] Hamas claimed to “lure” Israeli armor from the Netzarim corridor into an area in Mughraqa where its fighters had set improvised explosive devices and unexploded rockets dropped from Israeli aircraft.[31] A Palestinian journalist claimed that two soldiers from the IDF 99th Division were killed in the Hamas attack.[32] The IDF confirmed the deaths of two soldiers in the Gaza Strip on April 28 but did not specify how they died.[33] Five Palestinian militias separately targeted Israeli positions near the Netzarim corridor with indirect fire.[34]



**The IDF announced an expansion of the humanitarian zone in the southern Gaza Strip on April 28.[35]** The new area extends from the former zone in al Mawasi eastward to the Salah ad

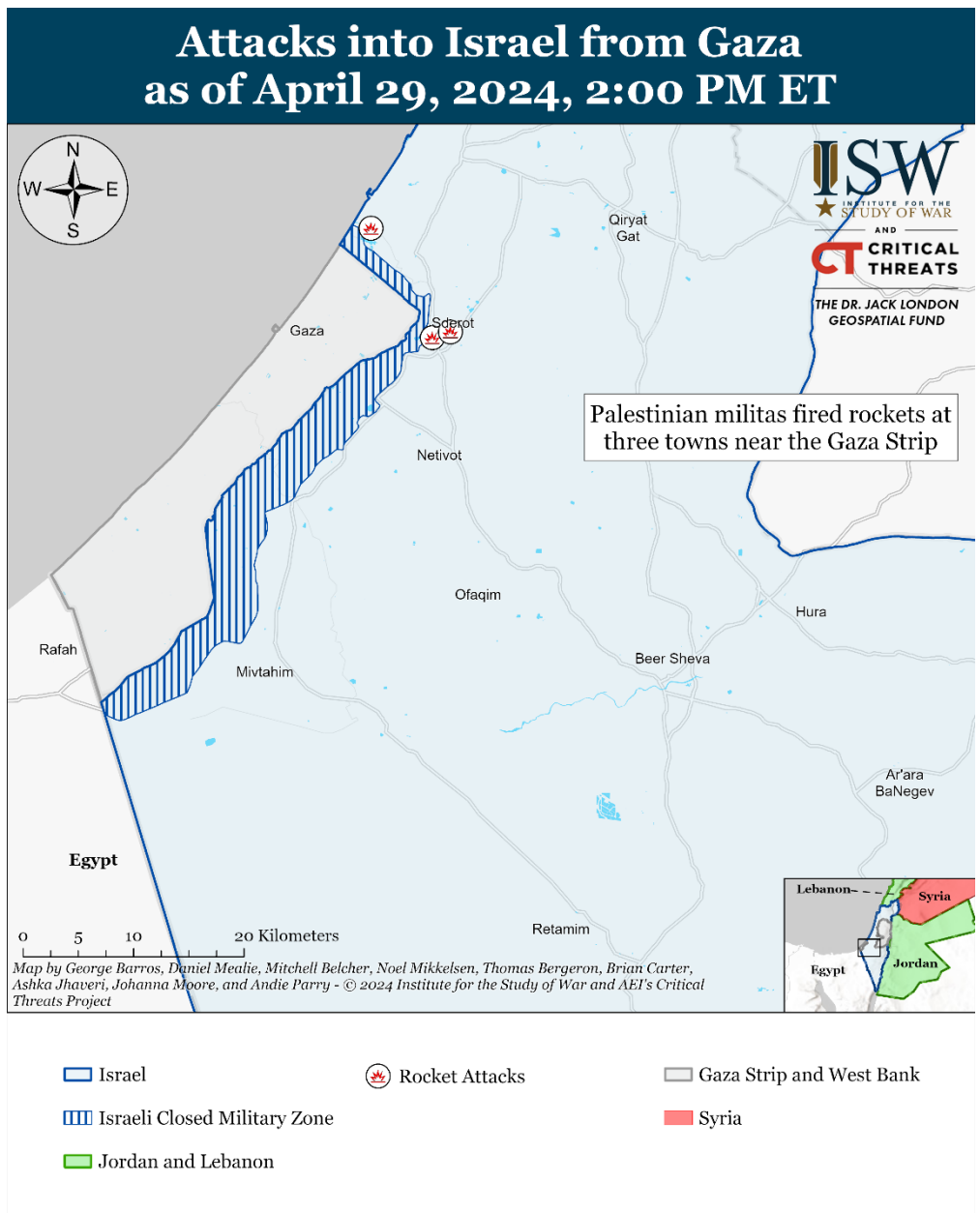
Din road and northward into Deir al Balah.[36] The IDF conducted clearing operations in parts of the humanitarian zone around Khan Younis in early 2024 but has not fully cleared western Deir al Balah.[37]



**The World Central Kitchen announced on April 28 the resumption of its humanitarian operations in the Gaza Strip.[38]** World Central Kitchen stated that a Palestinian team would begin to deliver food throughout the Gaza Strip on April 29.[39] The aid organization paused operations in the Gaza Strip after IDF drone strikes killed seven World Central Kitchen workers on April 1.[40] **Hamas External Political Bureau Deputy Head Musa Abu Marzouk stated that Hamas leadership would move to Jordan if forced from Qatar during an interview with Iranian state-run, Arabic-language network al Alam on April 28.[41]** Marzouk stated that “if the

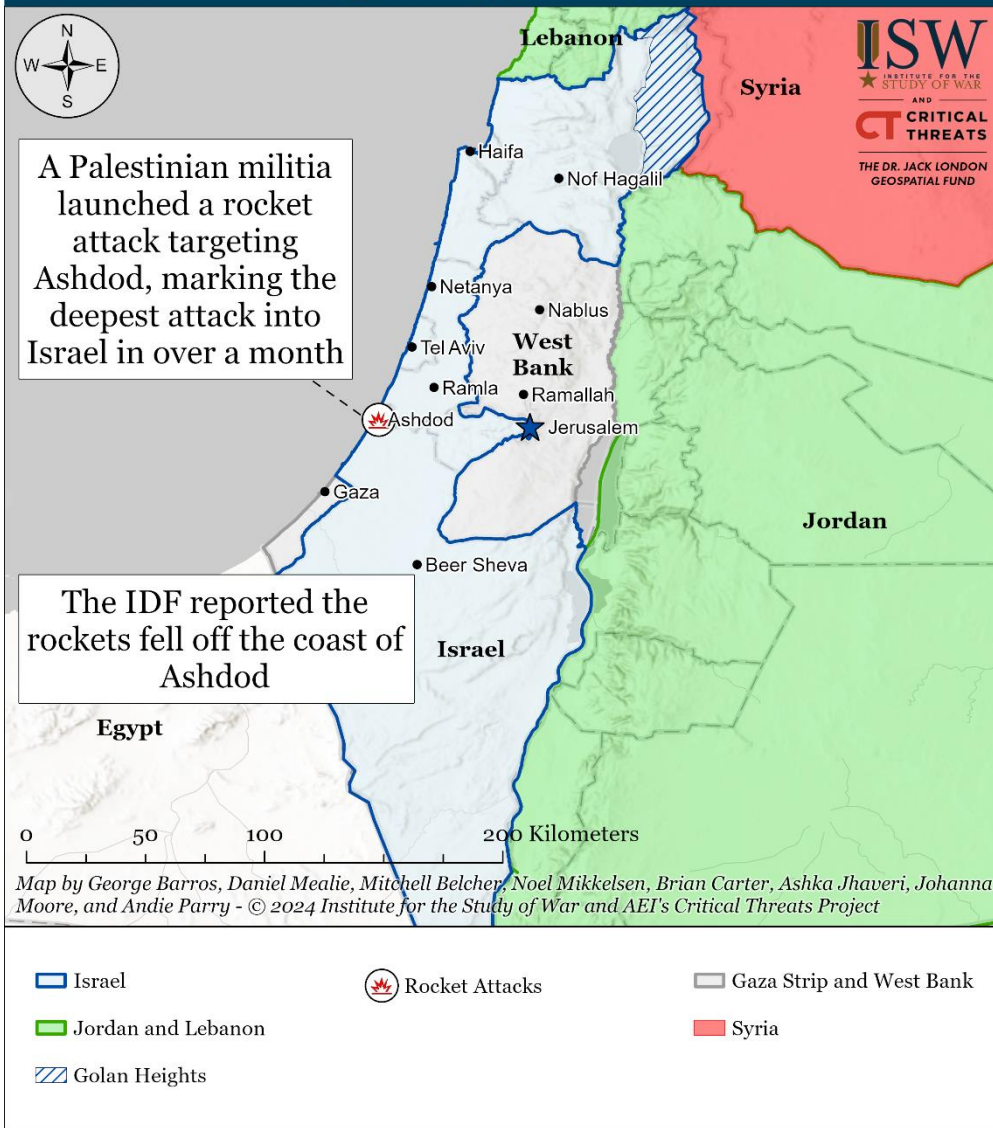
leadership of Hamas moves, which Hamas has not said it will do, it will move to Jordan.”[42] Marzouk added that many Hamas leaders are Jordanian citizens or carry Jordanian passports and that the Jordanian government supports Palestinian resistance against Israel.

**Palestinian fighters conducted four indirect fire attacks from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel on April 29.** Unspecified Palestinian fighters fired two long-range rockets from the Gaza Strip targeting Ashdod.[43] Israeli media reported that the rockets landed off the coast of Ashdod.[44] This attack is the first targeting Ashdod since March 25.[45] Palestinian Islamic Jihad fired rockets targeting two Israeli towns near the Gaza Strip.[46] Three Palestinian militias also claimed a combined rocket attack targeting an IDF site north of the Gaza Strip.[47]



*Recorded reports of attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.*

# Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of April 29, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Recorded reports of attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

## West Bank

### Axis of Resistance objectives:

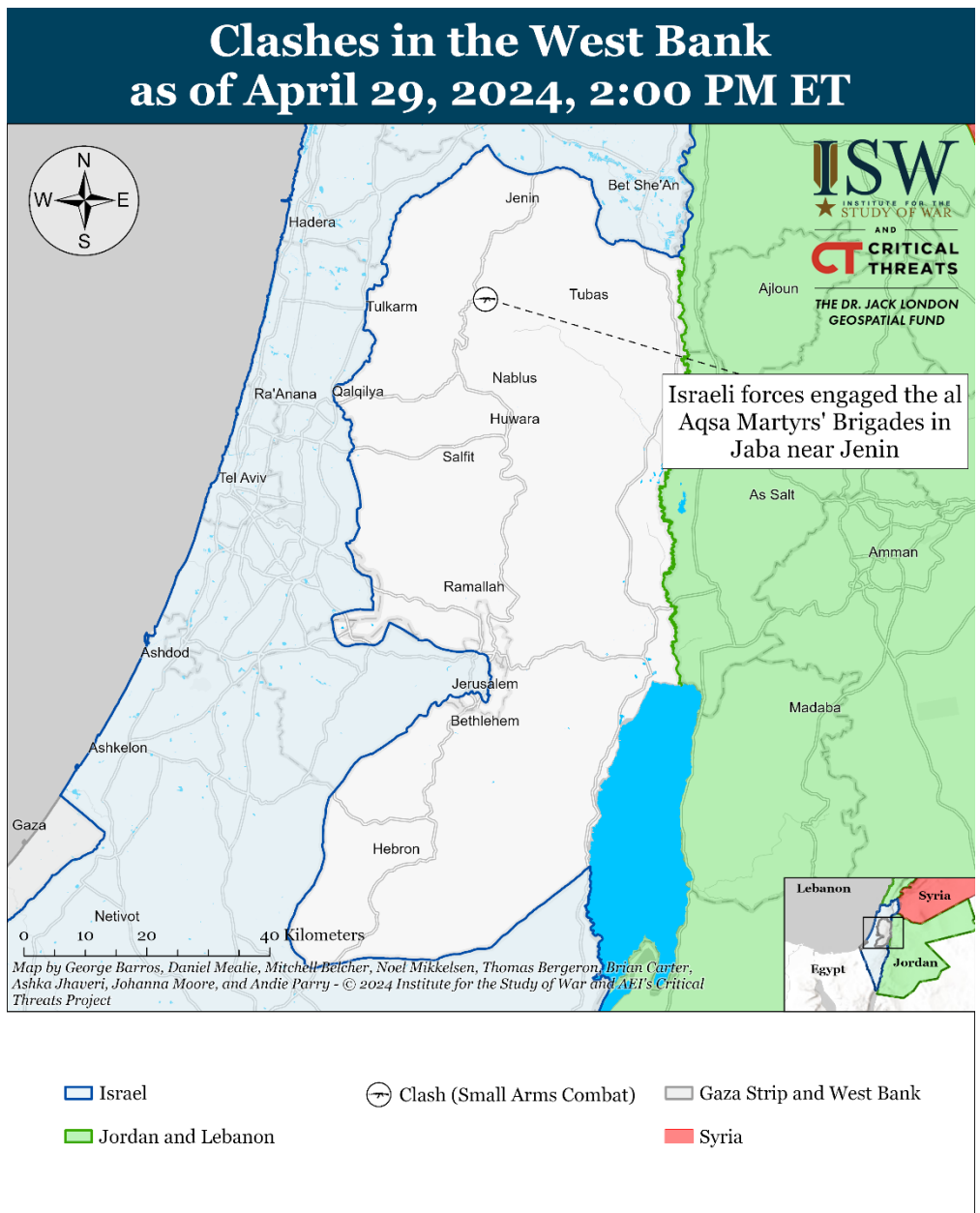
- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

**Israeli forces have engaged Palestinian fighters in at least one location since CTP-ISW's last information cutoff on April 28.[48]** The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fired small arms targeting Israeli forces in Jaba, south of Jenin, on April 29.[49]

**Israeli police arrested five Israeli settlers in the West Bank on April 28 for “inciting disturbances” following the killing of an Israeli boy on April 12.[50]** Israeli authorities charged the five individuals with shooting two Palestinians and setting fire to Palestinian property in



the West Bank.[51] Israeli media reported that Israeli settlers committed acts of violence on April 13 in at least eight Palestinian towns in the northern West Bank after the IDF found the body of the missing boy.[52] Israeli media reported that Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant approved the arrests.[53]



*This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.*

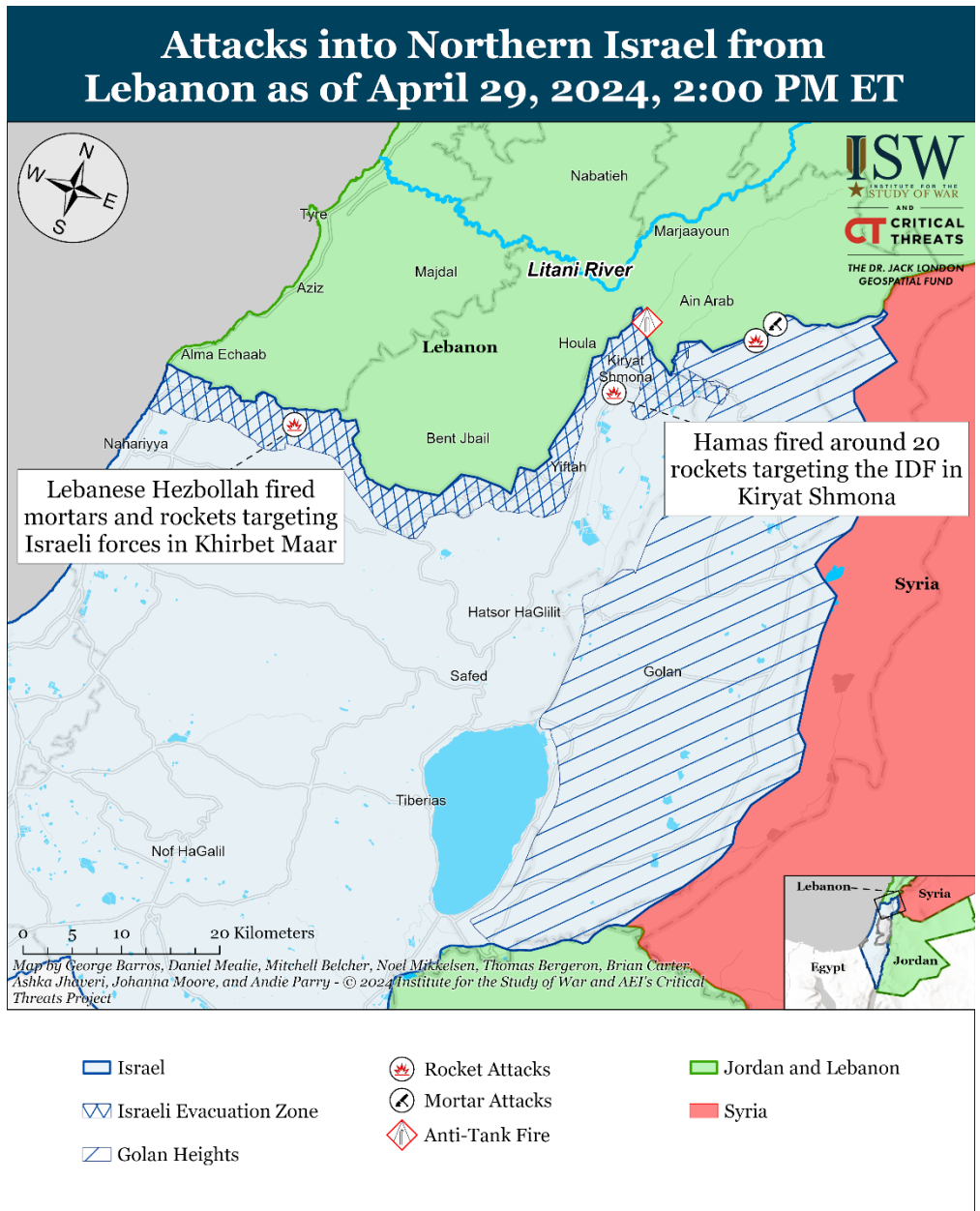
**Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights**

**Axis of Resistance objectives:**

- Deter Israel from conducting a ground operation into Lebanon
- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

**Iranian-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, have conducted at least six attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on**

**April 28.[54]** The al Qassem Brigades, which is the militant wing of Hamas, fired around 20 rockets targeting the IDF 769th Eastern Brigade in Kiryat Shmona on April 29.[55] The IDF said that it intercepted most of the rockets and that the rest fell in open areas.[56]



*Recorded reports of attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.*

**Iran and Axis of Resistance**

**Sixty-one Iraqi parliamentarians called for designating US Ambassador to Iraq Alina Romanowski a persona not grata on April 28 after she condemned a new Iraqi law that criminalizes homosexuality.[57]** The Iraqi parliament passed on April 27 the “Anti-Prostitution and Homosexuality Law” that enables Iraqi authorities to imprison individuals in same-sex relationships for up to 15 years.[58] The leader of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq, Qais

al Khazali, and other Iranian-backed Iraqi actors praised the law, claiming that it protects the Iraqi “value structure and cultural identity.”<sup>[59]</sup> Iranian-backed Iraqi parliamentarians accused Romanowski of “interfering in Iraqi internal affairs” after she condemned the law.<sup>[60]</sup> Former Parliament Speaker Mohammad al Halbousi previously blocked an extraordinary parliamentary session to expel Romanowski before the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court dismissed him in November 2023.<sup>[61]</sup> It is unclear whether current Parliament Speaker Mohsen al Mandalawi, who is close to the Shia Coordination Framework, would similarly block parliamentary efforts to expel Romanowski. Mandalawi praised the “Anti-Prostitution and Homosexuality Law,” claiming that it will prevent “moral decadence” in Iraq.<sup>[62]</sup>

**An unspecified gunman shot and killed prominent social media personality Ghufan Mahdi Sawadi in Baghdad on April 29.** Sawadi frequently posted dancing and singing videos on Instagram and TikTok.<sup>[63]</sup> An Iraqi court previously sentenced Sawadi to six months in prison in 2023 for promoting “indecent public behavior” on social media.<sup>[64]</sup> The Iraqi Interior Ministry is conducting an investigation into Sawadi’s death.<sup>[65]</sup>

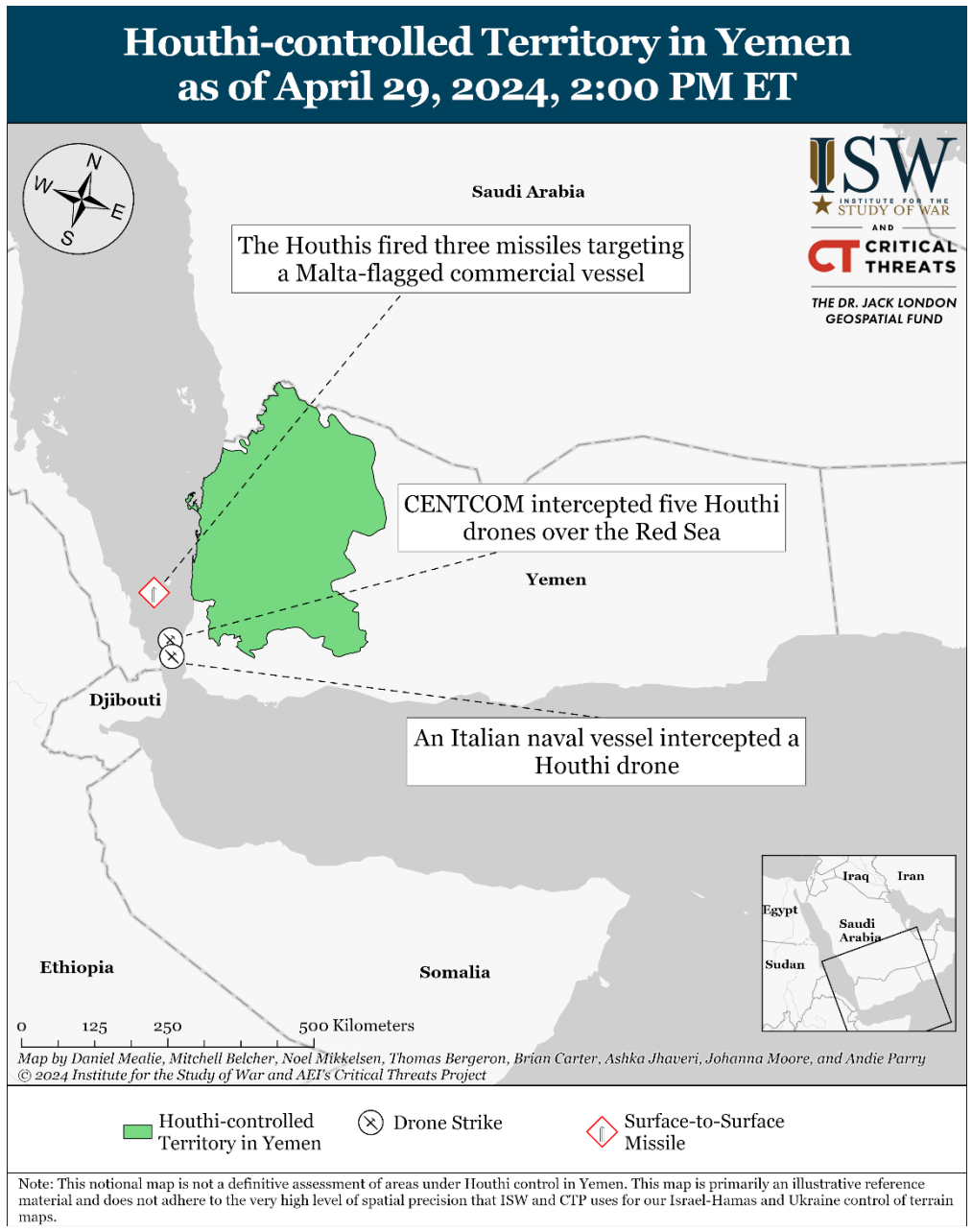
**The Iraqi Azm Alliance spokesperson claimed on April 29 that Sunni parties have agreed to support Salem al Issawi as Iraqi parliament speaker.**<sup>[66]</sup> Salem al Issawi is a member of the Sovereignty Alliance, a political party headed by United States-sanctioned and Iran-linked businessman Khamis al Khanjar.<sup>[67]</sup> Issawi won the second highest number of votes in the first round of the parliament speaker elections in January 2024.<sup>[68]</sup> The Azm Alliance spokesperson further claimed that former Parliament Speaker Mohammad al Halbousi’s National Progress Party does not have a parliament speaker candidate after its preferred candidate, Shaalan al Karim, withdrew from the speaker elections on April 18.<sup>[69]</sup> CTP-ISW previously assessed that the Shia Coordination Framework—a loose coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi political parties—was maneuvering to prevent Karim from becoming parliament speaker.<sup>[70]</sup>

**Local Syrian media reported that the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) deployed forces from Damascus to Suwayda Province between April 25 and 29 in response to mounting anti-Syrian regime tensions there.**<sup>[71]</sup> SAA reinforcements first deployed to Suwayda Province after local opposition groups detained several SAA officials on April 25.<sup>[72]</sup> The opposition groups demanded the release of a local student held in custody since February 2024 on charges connected to his alleged participation in anti-regime protests in Suwayda.<sup>[73]</sup> Anti-regime protests have fluctuated around Suwayda since August 2023.<sup>[74]</sup> A large convoy of over 50 SAA military vehicles, tanks, and buses entered Suwayda Province via the Damascus-Suwayda road and arrived at Khalkhala Military Airport in Hazm, Suwayda, on April 28, according to local sources.<sup>[75]</sup> Syrian authorities released the local student, and Suwayda opposition groups released the SAA officers the same day.<sup>[76]</sup> Syrian social media users posted videos on April 29 of further SAA reinforcements arriving in Suwayda Province.<sup>[77]</sup> CTP-ISW cannot verify the local reporting.

**The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Organization (UKMTO) reported an explosion causing minor damage to the container ship *Cyclades 54* nautical miles northwest of Mukha, Yemen, on April 29.**<sup>[78]</sup> UK maritime security firm Ambrey reported that the Houthis fired three missiles targeting a Malta-flagged vessel traveling from Djibouti to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, due to its trade association with Israel.<sup>[79]</sup>

**US Central Command (CENTCOM) intercepted five Houthi drones over the Red Sea on April 28.**<sup>[80]</sup> CENTCOM said that the drones presented an imminent threat to US, coalition, and

merchant vessels in the region.[81] The Italian Defense Ministry separately said on April 29 that one of its naval vessels intercepted a Houthi drone targeting a commercial vessel near the Bab al Mandeb Strait.[82]



**IRGC-affiliated media claimed on April 28 the IRGC has developed a new one-way attack drone which is “very similar” to the Russian Lancet drone.[83]** IRGC-affiliated media noted that the drone has structural similarities to the Russian ZALA Lancet drone. The Russian Air Force uses commonly Lancets as to conduct attacks in Ukraine. [84] Iran often exaggerates its military capabilities, so it is unclear to what extent Iran has anything seriously resembling a Lancet. The timing of IRGC-affiliated media publishing this information is especially noteworthy given that it coincides with the

Iranian defense minister, Mohammad Reza Gharaei Ashtiani, discussing possible arms deals with regional and extra-regional actors.

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