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## Iraq's resistance enters the war with new targets, advanced weapons

The Iraqi resistance is becoming a key player in the Resistance Axis, coordinating with Yemeni forces, intensifying strikes on a wider range of Israeli targets, and keen to reshape the war's trajectory.



(Photo Credit: The Cradle)

A year on since the launch of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, the [Iraqi resistance](#) has entered a new phase in its support for Gaza – and now Lebanon – with its operations taking on a more significant role in the widening regional war. These actions are not merely symbolic; the leadership of the resistance in Iraq has been focused on escalating its activities to pressure decision-makers in Tel Aviv.

Over the past 12 months, the Islamic Resistance of Iraq (IRI) has refined its tactics and upgraded its weaponry, ensuring that its strikes on both [southern](#) and [northern](#) parts of Israel, particularly in Eilat, achieve tangible results.

### **Resistance unity and a multi-front strategy**

The IRI's most notable attack occurred on [4 October 2024](#) when a military base in the northern Golan was hit, killing two Israeli soldiers and injuring 24 others from the "elite" Golani Brigade.

A week before the operation, Ali al-Mahdi, an Iraqi resistance commander, was [quoted](#) as saying:

**The armed factions have the full capacity and readiness in terms of fighters, weapons, and drones to fight a long war on a regional level. Therefore, any development in Hezbollah's war with the entity will directly drag the factions into an open war without red lines ... The resistance is fully prepared if it is necessary to go to Lebanon, or to continue carrying out strikes deep inside Israel with long-range missiles.**

Despite facing significant internal challenges and external pressures, the Iraqi resistance has been resolute about refusing to step back from the broader mission of taking part in the "[Unity of Fronts](#)." This strategy refers to the coordinated efforts across the region's Axis of Resistance, targeting the occupation state and US military sites on multiple fronts.

### **Phases of escalation**

Phase one of the IRI's military operations commenced shortly after Israel declared war on Gaza. At this point, resistance work focused on two primary targets: US military bases in Syria and Iraq and Israeli positions in southern occupied Palestine. Although the strikes on Israeli targets were initially limited, this phase marked the beginning of a broader strategy.

The second phase followed a truce on 2 February in which the Iraqi resistance faction Kataib Hezbollah responded to internal pressures by [temporarily halting](#) attacks on US bases and targets following a major operation at the [Al-Tanf](#) base.

In spite of this pause, Iraq's resistance factions significantly stepped up their strikes on Israeli targets, using both drones and Al-Arqaab cruise missiles to hit Israel's northern and southern regions. These strikes became more effective as the IRI began to employ advanced weaponry, such as drones and cruise missiles, forcing Israel to acknowledge the threat posed by resistance forces to the east.

The third phase unfolded about a month after pausing operations against US bases and involved closer and direct cooperation with [Yemeni forces](#). Together, in March, they launched joint operations targeting Israeli ships, the major Mediterranean port of Haifa, and

other critical infrastructure – joint efforts that were part of Sanaa’s own “[fourth phase of escalation](#).”

This phase highlighted the growing military coordination not only between the Iraqi resistance and Yemeni forces but also among the various factions aligned within West Asia’s Axis of Resistance.

Currently, the Iraqi resistance has entered its fourth phase, which is focusing on [striking](#) deeper into Israeli territorial depth, with an emphasis on northern areas of occupied Palestine. This escalation has coincided with Israel’s destructive attacks across [Lebanon](#) and the disruption of Hezbollah’s [command and control](#) structure with the targeted assassinations of secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah and other senior commanders.

What sets this phase apart is the increased frequency and intensity of attacks, as well as the introduction of [advanced drones](#) and weaponry into the conflict. On 3 October, the Iraqi resistance announced that they [targeted](#) a critical site in the southern occupied territories.

### **Iraq asserts itself in the Axis**

The continuation and intensification of these operations by the Iraqi resistance are aimed at achieving several strategic objectives. First, the resistance seeks to reaffirm its rising position within the Axis of Resistance, which is dedicated to preserving the unity of regional efforts against Israel and preventing its fragmentation by external forces, particularly the US.

Second, it aims to pressure decision-makers in Tel Aviv to halt the aggression against Gaza and Lebanon. Third, the resistance wants to keep Israel under constant threat, reminding it that it is vulnerable to attacks from the eastern front.

Finally, the operations are intended to signal to the US that the resistance is undeterred and may resume targeting American bases if provoked, particularly if US forces escalate their involvement in [support](#) of the occupation state.

There is little doubt that Washington is applying maximum pressure on the Iraqi government to rein in the IRI, as it did before the 2 February truce. But this time, Iraq’s resistance is mainly targeting Israel, which makes the US persuasion mission more difficult.

There seems little possibility of retreat at this stage, regardless of the pressure applied, particularly after Tel Aviv’s assassination of Nasrallah. The longtime Hezbollah leader is considered a beloved symbol of the resistance in Iraq, and the IRI feels more obligated than ever to demonstrate loyalty to him and to his organization’s essential role in supporting the Iraqis when they were invaded by ISIS. While ISIS was terrorizing wide swathes of Iraq, Lebanon’s Hezbollah sent fighters and cadres to support Iraqis and even participated in the confrontation.

## **Another front for Israel**

Tel Aviv, already stretched thin by conflicts on seven fronts, is expected to attempt strikes on the Iraqi resistance when the opportunity arises. However, Israel is currently preoccupied with its ongoing war against Hezbollah in Lebanon and its broader confrontation with Iran, making direct engagement with the Iraqi resistance less likely for the time being.

Still, the recent successful strike on the Golan Heights serves as a reminder of what Iraqis are prepared to do if the conflict escalates further. The leadership of the IRI is fully aware of the potential for Israeli retaliation, especially considering [past Israeli strikes](#), such as those in 2019, which targeted sectors of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

As the occupation state continues with its unprecedented aggressions against the region, the resistance understands that the outcome of this conflict will have far-reaching consequences for West Asia as a whole. Iraq, as an integral part of the region, is deeply intertwined with these developments.

The Iraqi resistance recognizes that its role in this war extends beyond defending Gaza and Lebanon. It understands that the current battle is a pivotal moment in the struggle for power in West Asia and that Baghdad is a [key player](#) in shaping the region's future.

With this in mind, Iraq's resistance appears committed to escalating its military operations, diversifying its tactics, and introducing more advanced weapons into the fight, knowing that the results of this conflict will reverberate throughout the region.

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