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## JPC Factsheet – Iran

*Updated April 15, 2024*

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, one of the main priorities of the Iranian ayatollahs' regime has been exporting its revolution abroad. [Designated a sponsor of terror by the US government in 1984](#), the Islamic Republic of Iran is considered the “foremost state sponsor of terrorism,” providing “a range of support, including financial, training, and equipment, to [terrorist] groups around the world – particularly Hezbollah,” [according](#) to the US State Department.

Tehran has utilized a network of over a dozen militias and terror organizations across the Middle East, with bases elsewhere across the globe, to sow instability, carry out attacks, and expand the reach of the Islamic Revolution. These groups, some with affiliated political entities designed to infiltrate or overtake local governments, ultimately report to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a paramilitary force established in 1979 separately from Iran's army to safeguard Iran's fundamentalist regime. The IRGC's Quds Force, an elite commando unit, has furnished weaponry, training, and financial backing to militias and political factions across the Middle East, including in Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, Syria, and Yemen.

### **Iran's Key Proxy Groups and Activities:**

#### 1. Hezbollah (Lebanon):

- Founded in the early 1980s with Iran's support, the Shi'ite Hezbollah plays a significant role in Lebanese politics and military activities. It has conducted numerous terrorist attacks worldwide and possesses a vast arsenal aimed at Israel. [Designated as a terrorist organization](#) by a large portion of the international community, Hezbollah has launched thousands of attacks against Israel since October 7.

#### 2. Hamas (Gaza Strip/West Bank):

- A Sunni Islamist terrorist organization, Hamas aims to replace Israel with an Islamic state. Funded and equipped by Iran since the early 1990s, it has been responsible for multiple high-casualty attacks against Israeli targets. On October 7, Hamas terrorists waged the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust – slaughtering babies, raping women, burning whole families alive, and taking hundreds of innocent civilians hostage.

#### 3. Palestinian Islamic Jihad:

- This group operates primarily in Gaza and the West Bank, receiving significant support from Iran. It actively participates in armed attacks against Israeli civilians and military targets.



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#### 4. Houthis (Yemen):

- The Houthis have waged a prolonged insurgency in Yemen, significantly supported by Iranian weaponry and military training. They have also targeted international shipping routes in the Red Sea.

#### 5. Other Groups:

- Iran supports various other militias across Iraq, Syria, and Bahrain, such as Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and Saraya al-Mukhtar, using them to exert influence and carry out proxy wars.

### **Direct Iranian attacks against Israeli, Jewish and American targets worldwide:**

Iran has a long history of attacking Israeli, Jewish, and American targets, either directly or by proxy. A non-exhaustive list of the most deadly attacks include:

- 1979: [Taking American diplomats hostage at US Embassy, Tehran.](#)
- 1983: [Bombing of US Embassy](#) (17 murdered) and Marine barracks in Beirut (241 US servicemen killed and 58 French servicemen killed)
- 1992: [Bombing of Israeli Embassy, Buenos Aires](#), Argentina (29 murdered/ 242 injured)
- 1994: [Bombing of the AMIA](#) (Jewish community) building in Buenos Aires, Argentina (85 murdered/over 300 injured.)
- 1996: Khobar Tower bombing in Saudi Arabia (19 killed, over 400 wounded.)
- 2019–2021 Persian Gulf crisis: Increase of military tensions between Iran and the US (8 American/1 British servicemen and civilians killed, more than 110 Americans wounded)
- From January 2021 to December 2022, about 13 Iranian attempted attacks against targets identified with Israel were reported, including diplomatic missions and diplomats, businesspeople, and tourists. [source and further details on these attempts: [INSS](#)]
- 2022: Iran carried out rocket attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria.
- 2023: Iran helps Hamas plan the October 7 attacks [source: [WSJ](#)]
- 2023/4: Iran proxy Hezbollah launches thousands of missiles in almost daily attacks on Israel's northern communities, following October 7 attacks.
- 2024: Iran seized container ship in the Strait of Hormuz [[CNN](#)]

### **Iran's Nuclear Race:**

Coupled with the Islamic Republic's pronounced ideology, Iran's efforts to become a nuclear state have been a significant source of international tension and are considered a direct threat to the region, including to Israel's national security. Iranian leaders including the Supreme Leader and several presidents have repeatedly [threatened to annihilate Israel.](#)



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## **Expansion and Secrecy (1980s-2002)**

During the 1980s and 1990s, Iran reinvigorated its nuclear program, in secret, after the country previously signed the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty ([1968, renewed 1995](#)) before the Islamic Revolution. These years saw the establishment of facilities that would later come to international attention, such as the uranium enrichment plant at Natanz and the heavy water facility at Arak. Iran did not disclose the construction of these facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), leading to international community to suspect that these facilities are intended for military development.

## **International Discovery and Response (2002-2015)**

Iran's clandestine nuclear activities were publicly exposed in 2002 by a dissident group, which led to increased scrutiny and investigations by the IAEA. Over the next decade, the international community, particularly the US, EU, and UN, imposed a series of economic sanctions aimed at curtailing Iran's nuclear program. Despite this, Iran expanded its uranium enrichment activities, insisting they were intended for peaceful purposes.

## **The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) (2015)**

After years of tension and negotiation, Iran and the P5+1 (the US, UK, France, Russia, China, and Germany) reached a nuclear deal. Under this agreement, Iran agreed to roll back its nuclear capabilities in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions. Key stipulations included reducing its stockpile of enriched uranium, limiting the number of enrichment centrifuges in operation, and allowing comprehensive IAEA inspections. The agreement included "sunset clauses" when the restrictions would expire.

## **US Withdrawal and Renewed Tensions (2018-present)**

In May 2018, the US unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA, reinstating economic sanctions against Iran. Iran gradually began exceeding JCPOA limits on nuclear activities, including uranium enrichment levels and research and development on advanced centrifuges. This escalation has led to heightened tensions with the US and uncertainty about the future of the nuclear deal.

## **Current Status and Global Concerns**

According to the latest reports, Iran continues to press ahead with its race to acquire nuclear technology, significantly increasing its stockpile of enriched uranium in [violation of its commitments under the JCPOA](#). These developments have sparked international concern that Iran may soon become a nuclear threshold state, i.e. a country that has overcome all technological obstacles and is technically capable of producing nuclear weapons independently but chooses not to do so for policy reasons. Iran insists that its nuclear program is intended solely for peaceful purposes.

*Sources: Reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA - provides ongoing assessments of Iran's nuclear program) and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA - details the restrictions and measures agreed upon by Iran and the P5+1).*



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## **Current developments:**

On Saturday night, April 14, 2024, Iran launched a barrage of more than 100 strike drones, the [largest swarm of UAVs in modern warfare](#), in an attack timed to hit in synchronization with dozens of cruise and ballistic missiles launched several hours later from within Iran's borders toward the Jewish state, the first-ever direct attack against Israel by the Islamic Republic, triggering air raid sirens throughout the country. Israel, with help from her allies, intercepted 99% of the attack drones and missiles fired at her territory.

Top Iranian commanders warned Israel on Sunday that the country would face an even larger attack if it retaliates against the overnight drone and missile strikes, adding that Washington has been told not to back any military action from its ally.

**For expert comments on the unfolding situation please check our [JPC Expert List on Iranian Attack](#)**

*Factsheet material has been collected from a number of resources. Please reach out if you have any questions or comments, or for follow up on specific information you'd like to explore further.*