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NUFDI's Latest Publications

Mapping a Shadow War: Since the 12-Day War, explosions and fires have been occurring across Iran. NUFDI and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) have jointly tracked and mapped these incidents. Check the map out here! You can also click here to see NUFDI and FDD's previous interactive project, which maps reports of strikes in Iran during the 12-Day War!

Brief Notes

IRGC Arrests 'Saboteur' Near Tehran: IRGC-affiliated Fars News Agency reported yesterday that an IRGC intelligence unit arrested a "saboteur" in the "mountains near Tehran." A video released by IRGC-linked Fars News shows IRGC personnel receiving satellite coordinates and detaining a shirtless, blurred-faced man who was later blindfolded and placed in a car. No further details were provided. Since the start of the 12-Day War, the Islamic Republic has detained thousands on security-related charges, including alleged links to Israel and exiled opposition groups.

Police Say 21,000 Detained During 12-Day War: During the 12-Day War, which began on June 13, Islamic Republic law enforcement arrested about 21,000 people, according to police spokesperson Saeed Montazerolmahdi. He claimed the police also detained 2,774 undocumented foreign nationals, 261 suspected spies, and 172 people for unauthorized filming. Over 40,000 officers and more than 1,000 checkpoints were deployed nationwide, with 102,000 conscripts mobilized since the start of the war.

New Security Chief on Regional Tour

Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), Ali Larijani, yesterday stated in Baghdad that Lebanese Hezbollah and other IRGC-backed "resistance movements…know well what benefits their own countries, so they do not need any guardian." His remarks come amid tensions between Beirut and Tehran over plans backed by the Lebanese government to disarm Hezbollah by the end of 2025. Larijani will travel to Lebanon tomorrow to meet senior officials.

Larijani visited Iraq to sign a bilateral security memorandum with Iraqi National Security Advisor Qasim al-Araji. Larijani stated that the memorandum's primary objective was to make it so that "no one and no country" could

undermine the security of either nation, adding that the deal could serve as a "model of security cooperation" for the wider region. State media withheld details, though some outlets speculated that discussions also addressed U.S. and Israeli control of Iraqi airspace during the 12-Day War.

Larijani's visit comes as Baghdad seeks to fully integrate the IRGC-backed Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) into the Iraqi state-controlled armed forces. The Iraqi-born Larijani met senior Iraqi leaders, including the president, the parliament speaker, and the foreign minister.

Pezeshkian administration spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani said Larijani's appointment was intended to bolster the Islamic Republic's bargaining power amid shifting regional dynamics. Larijani dismissed concerns about new threats, saying Tehran would not be unsettled by "perceived headwinds."

Lebanese Reaction to Larijani's Upcoming Visit

Lebanese daily An-Nahar reported that while Ali Larijani requested meetings with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, Foreign Minister Youssef Raji is unwilling to receive him, having privately criticized Tehran's stance on Lebanon's internal affairs.

Prime Minister Salam is expected to convey Lebanon's discontent with Tehran's attempts to exert control over internal matters and to inform Tehran of the impending potential for the Islamic Republic's ambassador to Lebanon to be declared persona non grata if further remarks are seen as infringing on the nation's sovereignty.

The visit follows recent statements from those within Tehran's political establishment, including senior cleric Ahmad Jannati and Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior advisor to the Supreme Leader, rejecting the disarmament plan, which Beirut views as interference.

Lebanese Agriculture Minister Nizar Hani, however, framed the visit as an opportunity for constructive dialogue, stressing Lebanon's openness to cooperation with all partners, including the Islamic Republic, while reaffirming "No one in Lebanon is debating whether to confine weapons to the state...we are all agreed on this."

Lebanese media voiced strong disapproval of Larijani's planned visit. The prominent MTV channel, often critical of Hezbollah, reported today that his visit comes "amid Iranian statements that have continued the assault on Lebanese sovereignty." In one article, the outlet labeled the visit "provocative" and characterized recent Islamic Republic figures' remarks as "a clear rejection of state sovereignty and blatant interference in the country's internal affairs." Another piece argued that Lebanon now has an opportunity to "break out of Iran's hegemony over the state."

At the same time, the Islamic Republic and Hezbollah supporters are trying to make the hashtag "ايران_سند_مش_وصاية" (translation: Iran is a supporter, not a guardian) go viral on social media platforms.

On the Radar

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett issued video messages to Iranians amid the current water and electricity crisis. Netanyahu urged citizens to "take to the streets" and said Israel is monitoring the Islamic Republic's enriched uranium with Washington. Bennett criticized Tehran's leadership for spending on "bombs, terror, and missiles" instead of water and welfare, saying the Islamic Republic must "choose peace over war."

- Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi today told his Armenian counterpart, Ararat Mirzoyan, that Armenia's new transit route with Azerbaijan must not restrict the Islamic Republic's access to communication routes. The route has drawn past opposition from Tehran over fears it could sever its land link to Armenia. An Armenian deputy foreign minister will "soon" visit Tehran to discuss the agreement, and President Masoud Pezeshkian will reportedly travel to Armenia on August 18 for a four-day visit.

- Kenya and the Islamic Republic have agreed to form a joint committee within 60 days to remove trade barriers and resume Kenyan tea exports to Tehran. The Islamic Republic banned Kenyan tea in 2023 after a $4.2bn corruption scandal involving a Kenyan firm and senior regime officials, in which low-grade tea was allegedly rebranded as high-grade.

- Islamic Republic Defense Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh, in a meeting with South African National Defense Force Chief Rudzani Maphwanya in Tehran today, said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran, based on its legitimate right, gave a firm and decisive response to the Zionist regime, to the extent that the enemy, through certain intermediaries, requested a ceasefire. We agreed to their request to prevent the escalation of the crisis, but we are closely monitoring the enemy's movements and are prepared for any new adventurism."

- A nationwide blackout hit several regions in central and southern Iraq yesterday amid extreme heat of up to 50°C (122°F), with Iraq's electricity ministry blaming overloaded transmission lines and surging demand. Media aligned with the IRGC-backed Kataib Hezbollah seized on the crisis to criticize Prime Minister Mohammed Shiaa al-Sudani's government, accusing it of "failure." The outage occurred days after an unprecedented official statement directly naming Kataib Hezbollah over a deadly July 27 clash with police, marking a rare public confrontation between Baghdad and an IRGC-backed militia. Public backlash online included criticism of Iraq's governance under what some users called a "corrupt, terrorist [Islamic Republic]-aligned authority."

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