



IRAN'S ACTIVITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

May 2021

The following is a summary of open-source media reporting on Iran's presence and activities in Latin America and the Caribbean in May 2021. This is not a complete list of media reports on Iran's activities in Latin America but are some of the most relevant articles and reports selected by SFS researchers and fellows. The monitor does source a limited amount of media reports from state-owned or -controlled media outlets, which are carefully selected and solely intended to report on news that is not reported on by other media and is relevant for understanding VRIC influence in the region. This report is produced as part of our VRIC Monitor published monthly by the Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS), a non-profit, national security think tank based in Washington D.C.



- Iranian IRGC linked Fars Air Qeshm cargo plane (EP-FAB) flew from Tehran to Nouakchott, Mauritania (probably to refuel) and then flew to Caracas, Maiquetia last night. - [Conflicts News Worldwide via Twitter on 23-MAY](#)
- Suhail Assad, an Argentine known for his work establishing Iranian cultural centers and mosques throughout Latin America, traveled to Brazil shortly before the current Israeli-Palestinian crisis began. He had been giving pro-Palestinian lectures before any of the attacks transpired. - [Jornalistas Livres on 08-MAY \(content in Spanish - VIDEO\)](#)
- The Central Bank of Iran gave the green light for commercial banks and foreign exchange houses to process import payments with bitcoin (BTC). Applications must only

handle cryptocurrencies mined by miners legally established in the country. - [Cripto Noticias on 27-APR](#)

- In a leaked audiotape that offers a glimpse into the behind-the-scenes power struggles of Iranian leaders, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the Revolutionary Guards Corps calls the shots, overruling many government decisions and ignoring advice. - [New York Times on 25-APR](#)

ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

- Israel has been attacked from Gaza and the West Bank by elements sponsored by Iran, but also aided by Havana. The main culprit in the current conflict is Hamas, a terrorist group established in 1987 with the support of Iran. In the past two weeks, Hamas launched more than 3,000 projectiles on civilian targets in Israel, of which 460 missed and landed on the Gaza Strip, injuring Palestinians. - [El Nuevo Herald on 24-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- We reiterate our strong condemnation of Israel's bombing of Gaza. We demand from the Israeli government respect for international humanitarian law and human rights. There is an urgent need to curb the violence against the Palestinian people. - [Bolivia's Foreign Ministry on Twitter on 17-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Cuba's foreign minister tweeted that his country "strongly condemns the indiscriminate bombardments against the Palestinian population in Gaza." Venezuela's foreign minister tweeted that, "The world must demand the end of this new phase of Zionist violence against the Palestinian people." Mexico and Chile called on both sides to de-escalate violence. Brazil, Colombia and Uruguay stressed Israel's right to defend itself. - [Miami Herald on 14-MAY](#)
- "The position of Argentina on the conflict between Israel and Palestine respects the position of the United Nations," Alberto Fernández told Infobae before leaving for a closed meeting with representatives of French companies that invest in the country. "We read the UN communiqué, and on its international position we wrote ours," added the head of state. - [Infobae on 12-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)

HEZBOLLAH

- For several decades now, Cuba's communist regime has maintained relations with both Hamas and Hezbollah, the same groups that today, with the help of the Castro regime, are trying to achieve Tehran's goal of destroying the only democracy in the Middle East. - [El Nuevo Herald on 25-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The unrest in Jerusalem has prompted Tennessee Senator Marsha Blackburn (R) to strike at the heart of anti-Israel terrorist funding. She is introducing a bill, "The Hezbollah Money Laundering Prevention Act of 2021," to try and choke off the financial flow into

the terrorist group that vows to eradicate the Jewish State and that she fears is helping fuel the current protests. - [Yahoo! News on 10-MAY](#)

- The Maduro regime in Venezuela has a long-standing and well-documented relationship with both Hezbollah and its sponsor, the Islamic Republic of Iran. This brazen association would never have been possible without the help of its lead strategist and facilitator down the years: Tareck El Aissami, Venezuela's current Minister of Petroleum and the man with the most substantial power in the Maduro regime. - [IranWire on 04-MAY](#)
- Hezbollah has built strong connections with the tri-border area of Paraguay-Argentina-Brazil in South America, home to more than 5 million people of Lebanese origin. Local contacts are believed to facilitate and conceal Hezbollah's drug-trafficking, money-laundering and terrorist-financing operations in this area. - [Arab News on 03-MAY](#)
- Explained: How Hezbollah built a drug empire via its 'narcoterrorist strategy.' Hezbollah is accused of exploiting the disarray in Syria by producing drugs in the war-torn country before exporting them for financial gain. Counter-narcotics agencies have recently foiled several smuggling operations. - [Arab News on 03-MAY](#)
- Panama Economy Minister Alexander presented in the Assembly a bill that introduces adjustments to the legislation on international tax transparency and the prevention of money laundering, the financing of terrorism and the financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. - [La Estrella on 29-APR \(content in Spanish\)](#)

THE NISMAN/AMIA CASE

- The circumstances of Nisman's death have never been explained. A new report by the Arab News Research and Studies unit, the third of its "Iran in Latin America" series, examines the steady decline of the Iran-Argentina relationship — and its possible resuscitation. - [Arab News on 19-MAY](#)
- To understand why there were so many contacts between spies in Nisman's final hours, federal prosecutor Eduardo Taiano declared the first round of the 89 spies to testify. Fourteen AFI spies testified on Tuesday, May 7. - [Clarín on 04-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Tomás Farini Duggan, lawyer for the relatives of Luis Czychewski and Mario Averbuch, victims of the AMIA attack, announced that he will reject Cristina Kirchner's request for annulment for the investigation of the cover-up of the authors of the attack and will request that the oral trial be carried out based on the complaint of the former prosecutor Alberto Nisman. In addition, Farini Duggan harshly questioned "the legal errors and omissions" of the vice president's video, the text of which they made actor Pablo Echarri read. - [Clarín on 04-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)

- The VP of Argentina, Cristina Kirchner, announced that she requested the nullity of the case on the memorandum of understanding with Iran, in which she is prosecuted for the alleged cover-up of the Iranians accused of the bombing of the AMIA Jewish community in 1994. - [The Rio Times on 04-MAY](#)

SYRIA

- The U.S. State Department has denounced Syria's presidential election on Tuesday, May 26, as neither "free nor fair" one day before voters are set to head to the polls across the beleaguered nation. - [The Hill on 25-MAY](#)
- Syrian parliament agreed to invite some parliaments of the brotherly and friendly countries, including Iran's to observe presidential elections in the country. According to Syrian news agency SANA the parliaments of Algeria, Oman, Mauritania, Russia, Iran, Armenia, China, Venezuela, Cuba, Belarus, South Africa, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Bolivia were invited by the Syrian lawmakers to observe the presidential elections in the country. - [Mehr News on 29-APR](#)

TURKEY

- The son of Turkey's former prime minister, accused of establishing a new cocaine route from Venezuela to Turkey, took part in an official parliamentary delegation's visit to a Turkish government-funded school in Venezuela to hide the real purpose of his visit. - [Nordic Monitor on 25-MAY](#)
- Infamous Turkish mafia leader Sedat Peker, in a video released on Sunday morning local time, accused the son of a former prime minister of sitting on top of a cocaine trafficking ring from Venezuela to Turkey. - [Ahval News on 23-MAY](#)
- State media reports Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlut Cavusoglu ratified the positive development of ties with Cuba, as he received Ambassador Luis Amoros Nuñez. During the meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the main issues of bilateral political and economic relations were discussed, according to diplomatic sources. - [Prensa Latina on 20-APR](#)

QATAR

- State media reports Panama is seeking to further strengthen its economic ties with Qatar through knowledge-sharing and exchanging of best practices in the fields of ports management and logistics, ambassador Musa Asvat has said. According to Asvat, plans are underway to connect Panama with Hamad Port and Education City to discuss "how to expand the horizon in these areas" and open investment opportunities and other avenues for cooperation. - [Gulf Times on 27-APR](#)