

Netanyahu can't sustain war without US aid

Yemenis took weapons, missiles from previous ruler

INTERVIEW

Israel's killing of more than 26,000 people in the Gaza Strip has plunged the Middle East into turmoil. While Western countries have taken no practical steps to stop Tel Aviv's war machine in its tracks or, in the case of the United States, have actively supported it, several members of the axis of resistance including the Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon have stood up for the innocents of Gaza. Shocked that not everyone is going to stand by and watch a genocide unfold, the US, the UK, and their allies have launched attacks on Yemen while declaring that either the Yemenis should show restraint or Tehran should rein them in. However, Tehran has repeatedly stated that what the Yemenis, Lebanese, or other resistance groups decide to do, they decide for themselves. This is where we are at: a war of weapons as well as a war of narratives. The following is part of ABC's interview with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on January 23, 2024, translated into English.



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (L) discusses the conflict in the Middle East in an interview with ABC's Martha Raddatz on January 23, 2024, as tensions rise in the Red Sea. mfa.gov.ir

ABC: I would like to start with the issue of Yemen. There have been numerous attacks on commercial ships and American ships. Do you support these attacks?

AMIR-ABDOLLAHIAN: You should logically inquire with the Yemenis about the situation in Yemen. Less than three weeks ago, one of the Yemeni leaders journeyed to Tehran and met with me. When it comes to the security of the Red Sea, we were in agreement that the safety of shipping and navigation is very important. The Yemenis believe in upholding the security of maritime travel and shipping. However, in solidarity with the civilian population of Gaza, they intercept ships heading towards the ports of the Israeli regime in the waters of the Red Sea. This decision is the Yemenis' way of supporting Palestine, and I consider it to be a courageous choice. Nevertheless, our intelligence confirms that maritime security is a concern for everyone, including the Yemenis. However, we must address the root cause and determine the necessary actions. In my view, if the genocide against Gaza ceases immediately, security will be restored in the Red Sea. This is what the Yemenis have conveyed to us.

You mentioned that the Houthis' actions are brave. So, does Iran endorse their actions in the Red Sea?

We will never embrace a risk to the safety of navigation and shipping, as the trade and transportation of Iranian oil is conducted through sea routes. We benefit from regional security and consider ourselves an integral part of the region and its security. However, let's delve into the root cause: the Yemeni genocide in Gaza and the killing of 25,000 civilians, including thousands of women and children. It is crucial to pay attention to the underlying causes. We all benefit from security,

but security is an interconnected concept. Presently, we observe that the security of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea are intertwined.

Do you support the action of Hamas on October 7?

Perhaps the most fitting interpretation of Hamas' action was articulated by the secretary general of the United Nations during the early days of the Gaza conflict. He stated that "October 7 did not happen in a vacuum." The conflicts in Palestine have deep roots that stretch back nearly eight decades of occupation of Palestinian land. From our perspective, Hamas is a Palestinian liberation movement that has opposed an occupation. Nonetheless, we do not endorse the killing of children, women, or civilians anywhere in the world.

I want to revisit the matter of Yemen. The United States has launched attacks against several targets in Yemen. The United States also claims that the Houthis have received weapons from Iran. Considering that you're concerned about security as well, don't you wish to put a halt to the ongoing events?

Firstly, Yemenis possess a wide array of weapons since the ousting of Ali Abdullah Saleh. Yemen harbors numerous facilities and capabilities within its borders. They even have ballistic missiles dating back to Ali Abdullah Saleh's era. We haven't supplied any weapons to the Yemenis; they have utilized their own resources.

We regard shipping and maritime security as integral to regional security. This matter holds significance for the Yemenis, too. The Yemenis have informed us that ceasing the conflict in Gaza will lead to a resolution of the crisis and tensions

in the Red Sea. During my meeting with David Cameron, the British foreign minister, in Davos last week, I conveyed that the joint military action by the US and UK against Yemen will not enhance regional security or alleviate tensions in the area.

You claim that Iran hasn't sent weapons to Yemen and that Yemenis possess their own weapons. However, two US Navy officers lost their lives while attempting to intercept a weapons shipment from Iran to Yemen. The Pentagon possesses photographs of these weapons, clearly demonstrating their Iranian origin.

These were primarily staged performances. If the United States possesses any information regarding this matter, they should present us with the evidence. Since October 7, the US has transferred numerous ships and logistics planes carrying weapons from its bases within and outside the region to Tel Aviv. They have publicly announced this.

In my view, the US should now address the extent of its contribution to the genocide and the killing of children and women in Gaza with these weapons. Why did they choose to exacerbate and intensify the conflict in Gaza and the West Bank instead of working towards its cessation? America itself stands accused; it cannot accuse others. America is more than simply an accused party; it has committed a crime and is attacking Yemen alongside the UK without coordinating with the United Nations, thereby violating international law. What authorization exists to attack Yemen? Has the Security Council issued such a permit? Iran has not supplied any weapons to Yemen.

Are you concerned about the war spreading throughout the region? Currently, you have the backing of

Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Hamas. There is a lot of worry that Iran will get involved or cross the line.

Leading up to the October 7 operation, Israel was tearing down homes and hospitals and causing the deaths of innocent civilians in Gaza and the West Bank for weeks, months, and years. Hamas's actions were a reaction to the countless crimes committed by the Israeli regime against the Palestinians. We cautioned after October 7 that given our understanding of the region, there was a strong likelihood of an escalation and expansion in the scope of the war. And that's exactly what has happened now. However, the root of the crisis stems from the behavior of the extremists in the Israeli regime's cabinet. Yes, we are worried about the war expanding. Everyone stands to lose from its spread.

What measures do you and Iran take to prevent the war from spreading?

As Iran's foreign minister, I am currently in New York. I will propose solutions at the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council on how to save the West Asian region from this crisis. The Islamic Republic of Iran remains committed to restoring stability and peace to the region. Let us not forget that we battled ISIS for years in Iraq and Syria, and our finest military advisors were martyred by terrorists in those countries. No one gains from a war. We never consider the solution to be engaged in a war.

Does Iran have a red line for going to war with the US?

Firstly, the war's scope in the region has already expanded, which means a growing risk of an even wider conflict. All parties should strive to de-escalate tensions and focus on a political resolution. If the

US ceases its logistical, weapons, political, and media support today and stops aiding Israel's genocide in Gaza, Netanyahu wouldn't be able to sustain the war even for 10 minutes. Therefore, the key to resolving the issue lies in Washington, more than it lies in Tel Aviv.

You mentioned that the United States is responsible for the war's expansion. Iran is also responsible. In your opinion, what is the likelihood of war between Iran and the US?

Over the past 110 days or so, American officials have repeatedly conveyed to us that the United States does not desire an expansion of the war. We do not seek to broaden its scope either, but we candidly inform the Americans that they cannot escalate the intensity of the conflict in Gaza and the West Bank, engage in a military clash with Yemen in the Red Sea, and then talk about restricting the war's expansion! The situation in the region is extremely delicate. One must proceed with utmost caution. The United Nations, the United Nations secretary general, and the United Nations Security Council, entrusted with the responsibility of upholding international peace and security, should be allowed to fulfill their obligations.

America is not the village chief or the uncontested leader of the world! It is a member of the United Nations among others. America should comprehend that security in the region cannot be achieved through war and military actions. Our region is home to profound historical civilizations. We should engage in dialogue using civilized language and show respect to the inheritors of these great civilizations. We will persist in our efforts to establish stability and security and maintain a region characterized by sustainable development and security.