



Top general:

Iran's operation achieved all its objectives



President:

Operation taught Israel unforgettable lesson



IRGC chief:

Iran's response will be harsher if regime hits back



Iran's FM:

Why don't countries urge Israel to show restraint?

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Projectiles are seen in the sky above Al-Quds after Iran launched drones and missiles towards Israel on April 14, 2024.

● REUTERS

Tehran, Moscow finalizing agreement for constructing Rasht-Astara railway



Tehran and Moscow are finalizing the draft of a contract for the implementation of agreement to construct the Rasht-Astara Railway.

In a meeting held between Deputy Minister of Russian Railways Sergey Pavlov and Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali, the two sides emphasized compiling the contract for the implementation of the agreement to construct the Rasht-Astara Railway, reported Tasnim News Agency.

During the meeting, the two sides explored avenues for the development of transportation within the framework of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

In addition, the two sides examined the trend of bilateral cooperation regarding the construction of the Rasht-Astara Railway with the framework of the INSTC, according to the website of Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.

The Deputy Minister of Russian Railways acknowledged during the meeting that transporting containerized cargo from the eastern side of the INSTC registered a 400 percent growth through 'Sarakhs' and 'Incheh-Boroun' customs in the first quarter of the current year (January-March) compared to the same period last year. Talks are ongoing between Tehran and Moscow to determine the tariff for transporting chemical fertilizer and coal from Russia to Iran, the United Arab Emirates and India, Pavlov added.

Transportation experts opine that with the expeditious completion of the Rasht railway line, a portion of the traffic of the North-South corridor will be diverted from the road to the rail. This will not only reduce the cost and time of transporting goods but also provide the requisite platform for the development of the volume of Iran's foreign trade.

The completion of the North-South Corridor, including the Rasht-Astara railway, will confer substantial benefits to Iran and the other countries involved. It will amplify Iran's share of transit, predominantly in Caspian shipping, and position it as the hub of goods transit from southern countries to Europe, leading to a substantial reduction in transport costs and time. The development of the corridor will also have a positive impact on the overall economic growth of the region and create new employment opportunities.

Iran-Turkmenistan border trade on the rise: *Lawmaker*



By Sadeq Dehqan & Reza Abesh Ahmadlou
Staff writers

A member of Parliament said Bajgiran in the north-eastern province of Kohrusan Razavi could be the gateway to the Central Asian countries as well as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states.

Ali Azari told Iran Daily that the trade between Iran and Turkmenistan through the border of Bajgiran is on the rise.

In recent months, a major part of Iran's commercial interactions with the member countries of the

SCO takes place through the border crossing, the MP noted.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a Eurasian political, economic, international security and defense organization established by China and Russia in 2001.

It is the world's largest regional organization in terms of geographic scope and population, covering approximately 80% of the area of Eurasia and 40% of the world population. As of 2021, its combined GDP was around 20% of global GDP.

Azari also explained about the economic relations between Iran and Turkmen-

istan saying that "In the past few years, our side could not establish good relations with Turkmenistan, and therefore the borders between the two countries were closed to a large extent, but in the incumbent government, good interactions between the two countries have been established. Based on this, business interactions in the border areas have flourished."

Bajgiran region has the capacity to become a joint free zone between Iran and Turkmenistan, the



lawmaker noted adding that preliminary measures are underway for the border region to become a joint free zone in the future.

"The government has issued the necessary directives in this regard, but the process of administrative work related to this issue should be accelerated so that the fruits of it can be benefited as soon as possible."

Iran shares borders with 15 countries, he pointed out noting that "Today, we believe that the country's borders should be used for

the development of cultural, economic relations with proper management. The government and the Parliament intend to revive these capacities at the borders to use them for the progress and development of the country."

Each of the border crossings of Iran can be exploited as a free trade zone which are better than oil wells for the country, the lawmaker said.

No delay is accepted in the development of border regions, he noted saying that the government should more seriously pursue the resolution of related issues.

The incumbent govern-

ment has focused its foreign policy priority on the neighbors and friendly and aligned countries, the MP said.

He explained that based on the policy, we have witnessed the development of cooperation with neighboring countries, and in parallel, Iran became a member of some important regional and international agreements, such as the BRICS and the SCO.

"Our membership in these treaties improved the country's status in the field of international relations and helped to improve the country's economic situation," the MP concluded.

NPC: 12 petchem projects will come on stream by March



Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) managing director announced that 12 projects will become operational by the end of the Iranian calendar year of 1403 (March 20, 2025).

Morteza Shahmirzaei urged all engaged in the petrochemical industry to do their best and boost synergy in an effort to achieve the strategic goals set in the current year designated by the Leader as the year of "Surge in Production

Through People's Participation", Shana reported. The deputy oil minister assured that the exploitation of 12 petrochemical projects will play a decisive role in increasing production and enhancing economic development in the country.

The NPC officials and employees, the managing directors of petrochemical companies and holdings, and other senior officials attended the ceremony.

Bitcoin, other cryptos down



The cryptocurrency market witnessed drop overnight Saturday amid an unprecedented Iranian drone and missile attack on Israel.

Bitcoin was down some 8% late on Saturday evening as U.S. officials confirmed the attack was taking place, CNBC wrote.

Bitcoin had been trading at around \$70,000 on Saturday evening but plunged to below \$62,000, according to data from the Bitstamp exchange. By Sunday morning it had rebounded to trade above \$64,000. Other coins like ether also saw heavy selling, down by up to 10% in some cases.

The sell-off for bitcoin was the steepest in more than a year, according to Bloomberg, with the coin hitting new records recently amid inflows into US spot bitcoin ETFs which continue to drive the cryptocurrency's price action.

Iran-Iraq gas contract extension outcome of promoted energy diplomacy: MP

The extension of a contract to export Iran's gas to Iraq is the outcome of promoting energy diplomacy, particularly with neighboring states, said a member of the Parliament's Energy Committee.

Ramezanali Sangdovini told Shana the incumbent government has established good relations with neighbors and other countries, including the members of BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO),

leading to strong diplomacy.

Capable knowledge-based companies were formed, particularly in the oil and gas sectors, amid the enemy's sanctions, said the lawmaker, adding the companies are now producing a great number of products needed by the oil industry, helping the energy sector develop.

Mohammad Baqeri, a member of the Parliament's Economic Committee, said the current

government inheriting tough conditions stemming from the sanctions and the previous government's incompetence was faced with problems about exporting oil and non-oil products and has tried to improve the country's economy since it took office in August 2021. Joining the international and extra regional agreements, the incumbent government has boosted its overseas synergy, said the legislator.



Elegance of filigree, a journey through Iran's exquisite metalwork tradition



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Iranica Desk

Filigree work in Iran is a distinguished sub-branch of traditional metalwork, showcasing intricate craftsmanship in creating decorative dishes using thin silver wires. While silver is a common metal used, filigree art also incorporates copper and gold to craft exquisite pieces. Cities like Zanjan, Ardebil, and

Isfahan are renowned for their expertise in this handicraft, each with its unique style and specialization. Tools such as filigree threads, silver ingots or wire, and rolling machines are essential in the creation process. The meticulous steps involved in crafting filigree dishware include material selection, wire preparation, template placement, thread fill-

ing, soldering, cleaning, and finishing touches. Common motifs like botteh jegheh adorn these products, adding to their allure. Silver is predominantly used in filigree work; however, copper filigree products are gaining popularity due to their affordability. These intricate designs are not limited to dishware but also extend to jewelry items like rings, pins, chains, and plaques,

enhancing their aesthetic appeal. Cities like Zanjan, Isfahan, and Ardebil stand out for their expertise in filigree work. Zanjan is known as the "filigree capital" of Iran, producing a wide range of silver products with arabesque and geometric designs. Isfahan's filigree workshops focus on high-quality plated silver dishware coated with polyester for

enhanced appearance. Ardebil boasts a rich history of handicraft development with filigree art prevalent in jewelry making. The difference between Isfahan and Zanjan filigree work lies in the karat of silver used and design patterns. Isfahan typically uses 90-95 karat silver, while Zanjan employs 99.9 (100 karat) silver, with more delicate patterns. Learning filigree work can

be pursued online or in-person, offering individuals the opportunity to create unique products for sale. Iranian handicrafts like filigree work attract tourists with their beauty and diversity. Exploring the best examples of this art form in cities like Isfahan and Zanjan promises a captivating experience showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Iran.

Explore Pakistan: A land of natural wonders



EXCLUSIVE

Nestled amidst the towering peaks of the Himalayas, Karakoram, and the Hindu Kush ranges lies a region of breathtaking beauty and awe-inspiring landscapes - the northern areas of Pakistan. It comprises Chitral Valley, Swat Valley, Naltar Valley, Naran and Kaghan, Fairy meadows and part of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Renowned globally for its pristine natural beauty, diverse culture, and warm hospitality, this region offers an unparalleled experience for adventurers, explorers, nature lovers and culture aficionados alike.

A tapestry of natural splendor

The northern areas of Paki-

stan are a mosaic of stunning natural features, from snow-capped peaks to lush valleys, crystal-clear rivers, and azure lakes. Among its most iconic landmarks is the mighty K2, the second-highest peak in the world, which invites mountaineers and trekkers from across the globe to conquer its formidable slopes. The region is home to five of the 14 eight-thousanders, including K2, and additionally has more than fifty mountain peaks above 7,000 metres (23,000 ft). Three of the world's longest glaciers outside of Earth's polar regions are found in Gilgit-Baltistan. Trekking and mountaineering are at their best here. The convergence point of the world's three mightiest mountain ranges the Karakoram, the Himalayas and

the Hindukush in a small town Jaglot is the scenery offered by nature only in this area. The region is also home to several other lofty peaks including Nanga Parbat, Rakaposhi, and Tirich Mir, each presenting a challenge and a spectacle for those who dare to venture into their realms. The Karakoram Highway, often dubbed the Eighth Wonder of the World, snakes through these mountains, providing one of the most breathtaking and safest road trips on earth alongside the mighty Indus River. Venturing further into the heart of the northern areas unveils a treasure trove of natural wonders. The Hunza Valley, with its terraced fields, orchards laden with apricots, and the



iconic Baltit and Altit forts, offers a glimpse into the rich history and vibrant culture of the region. Nearby, Attabad Lake, formed as a result of a landslide in 2010, mesmerizes visitors with its striking turquoise waters against the backdrop of rugged mountains.

Cultural richness and heritage

Beyond its natural splendor, the northern areas of Pakistan are steeped in history and culture. The region is inhabited by diverse ethnic groups including the Shinas, Wakhi, Burusho

(or Hunzakuts), and Baltis, each with its own unique traditions, languages, history and cultural festivals.

One of the most captivating aspects of the region's culture is its music and dance. Traditional tunes echoing through the valleys, accompanied by the graceful movements of dancers clad in vibrant attire, offer a glimpse into the soul of the northern areas.

The architecture of the region is equally fascinating, with ancient mosques, forts, and historical sites dotting the landscape. The Baltit Fort in Hunza, dating back over 700 years, stands as a testament to the region's rich heritage, while the picturesque Khaplu Palace in Skardu offers a

glimpse into the royal past of the Baltistan region. Shangrila Resort Skardu is an awesome treat surrounding Kachura Lake. The colorful flowers and lush green lawns give full serenity combined with pleasant weather.

Adventure awaits

For adventure enthusiasts, the northern areas of Pakistan offer a playground like no other. From trekking and mountaineering to rock climbing, white-water rafting, and paragliding, the region presents a myriad of adrenaline-pump-



ing activities against the backdrop of some of the world's most spectacular scenery.

The Karakoram Range, in particular, is a mecca for trekkers, with trails leading through remote valleys, past shimmering glaciers, and alongside glistening alpine lakes. The K2 Base Camp trek, in the shadow of the majestic peak itself, is a bucket-list experience for many adventurers, offering a challenging but immensely rewarding journey through some of the planet's most rugged terrain.

Paradise on Earth

While the northern areas of Pakistan are a haven for travelers seeking adventure and natural beauty, they are also fragile ecosystems that require careful preservation and sustainable tourism practices. Efforts

by local communities, government agencies, and conservation organizations are essential to protect the region's pristine environment and cultural heritage for generations to come. The local flora and fauna are also very unique.

The northern areas of Pakistan stand as a testament to the incomparable beauty and diversity of our planet. From its towering peaks to its vibrant culture and warm hospitality, this region captivates the hearts and minds of all who are fortunate enough to experience its wonders. Whether seeking adventure, cultural enrichment, or simply a moment of awe-inspiring tranquility, the northern areas of Pakistan offer an unforgettable journey and a lifetime experience into the heart of nature's grandeur.



'Disastrous': Israel-Iran tensions test limits of US policy amid Gaza war



By Ali Harb
Reporter

PERSPECTIVE

United States President Joe Biden had a brief but stern warning for Iran as it promised to retaliate against Israel for a deadly air raid on its consulate in Damascus: "Don't."

But analysts say that Iran likely will launch its own attack, raising fears of a regional war and showing the limits of US deterrence efforts in the Middle East.

The brinkmanship and resulting tensions have put further strain on Washington's foreign policy. Already, the US is caught between two seemingly conflicting priorities: offering unconditional support for Israel and preventing the conflict in Gaza from expanding.

"Biden is doubling down on a formula that so far has been absolutely disastrous," said Trita Parsi, executive vice president at the Quincy Institute, a think tank that promotes diplomacy.

Parsi said Biden should have rebuked Israel for attacking the Iranian embassy on April 1, violating international law, and endangering US troops in the region. But, he explained, the Biden administration is rewarding the Israeli cabinet by promising to support it instead.

The US — unlike some of its Arab and Western allies — has not condemned the Israeli strike on the Iranian diplomatic facility in Syria, which killed seven members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), including two generals. The White House, however, was quick to distance itself from the strike, stressing that the US was not involved in it.

US 'devoted' to Israel's defence

US diplomats have reportedly been working the phones this week, speaking with their counterparts across the world to urge restraint from Iran.

While calling for de-escalation, US officials have also reaffirmed their country's "ironclad" support for Israel, raising fears of a direct confrontation between Washington and Tehran.

"We are devoted to the defence of Israel. We will support Israel. We will help defend Israel, and Iran will not



Smoke rises after an Israeli strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria, on April 1, 2024.
REUTERS

succeed," Biden said on Friday. The Pentagon and State Department have also expressed similar positions. "This completely deprives Israel of any incentives to de-escalate," Parsi said.

He added that Biden's backing of Israel mirrors his "bear hug" approach to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the outset of the war on Gaza, which gave a green light to the mass killings and rights violations in the Palestinian territory. "That helped shape Israel's strategy that knew no limits, that did not care about international law — because they had come to understand that Biden will support them no matter what," Parsi told Al Jazeera.

Sina Toossi, a senior fellow at the Center for Inter-

national Policy think tank, called the US approach to the crisis "hypocritical and contradictory". "They're calling on all the other parties in the region to be restrained, constantly telling the Iranians 'don't escalate', whereas they encourage Israelis to act with total impunity," Toossi told Al Jazeera.

Iran says Israel 'must be punished'

He added that the Iranian pledge to retaliate is partly driven by the perception that the US and Israel believe they can cause harm without triggering a strong reaction from Tehran, which does not want a regional war. But now, Iran wants to draw a firm line, Toossi told Al Jazeera. "It can very objectively be stated that US poli-

cy has gotten us into this situation."

The Israeli military has been targeting Iran-linked sites in Syria for years, as Tehran bolsters its military presence in the war-torn country, but experts say Tehran saw bombing a diplomatic facility as a particularly brazen act that should not go unanswered.

"The consulate and embassy offices in any country are considered to be the territory of that country. When they attack our consulate, it means they have attacked our territory," Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday. "The Zionist regime made a mistake and must be punished and will be punished."

It remains to be seen where and how that promised punishment will come, but if it happens, it could be a

Biden should not follow Netanyahu into war with Iran



By Daniel Larison
Columnist

OPINION

The US and Israel have been raising the alarm of a possible Iranian retaliatory strike in response to last week's Israeli attack on an Iranian diplomatic facility in Damascus. The president once again pledged "ironclad" US support for Israel in the event of an Iranian response, and the head of Central Command, Gen. Erik Kurilla, was reportedly headed to Israel Thursday to coordinate with Israeli leaders ahead of the expected strike. The administration is moving in the wrong direction. The US ought to be distancing itself from Israel's illegal attack, but instead, the Biden administration is moving to shield Israel from the consequences of its own actions.

Israeli forces have routinely struck Iranian and other targets in Syria for more than a decade, but the attack on the consulate in Damascus was a major escalation both in terms of the location and the rank of the Iranian officers that were killed. The Israeli cabinet appears to want to goad Iran into a military response to divert attention from the slaughter and famine in Gaza and to trap the US into joining the fight. The president has made it that much easier for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by volunteering to walk into the trap.

The US is at considerable risk of becoming involved in a direct conflict with Iran thanks to the reckless actions of the Netanyahu cabinet and the president's lockstep support. This does not serve legitimate US security interests. The US cannot afford another conflict in the Middle East, and siding with Israel exposes US forces to significant unnecessary dangers. The US is under no obligation to come to Israel's defense if Iran retaliates against an Israeli strike, and the president has no authority to commit the US to fight a war for another entity, especially when that entity is not a treaty ally.

President Biden said this week that the US would do "all we can to protect Israel's security," but this knee-jerk response is the wrong one under the circumstances. Why is the US putting itself on the hook to protect Israel, which is more than capable of fending for itself? It is an unnecessary commitment, and it is unwise. It risks fueling a regional war that the administration has said it wants to avoid, and it rewards Netanyahu for his rogue behavior.

American troops have already come under attack

because of our government's support for the war in Gaza. The administration's response to the war over the last six months has already been detrimental to US interests and harmful to America's reputation. This latest commitment to protect Israel while the war in Gaza continues compounds these earlier errors and does even more damage to our country's global image.

US intelligence has reportedly warned that an Iranian response is "imminent". It remains unclear exactly what form Iranian retaliation might take, but it seems very unlikely that the Iranian government will choose not to answer a direct attack as brazen as this one was. The response could involve missile launches from Iranian territory, as we saw in the response to the US assassination of Qassem Soleimani in 2020, or it could be some combination of missile and drone attacks from various Iranian-backed groups. Whatever shape the response takes, the US should steer clear of the ensuing conflict. The US should not lift a finger to assist an Israeli cabinet that went out of its way to provoke this fight.

The war in Gaza has been a wake-up call for the United States that its "ironclad" relationship with Israel is a serious liability for American interests. Jon Hoffman of the Cato Institute recently laid out the case against continuing the "special relationship" with Israel: "A special relationship with Israel does virtually nothing for the United States while actively undermining US strategic interests and often doing violence to the values that Washington claims to stand for." Given how little the US benefits from this relationship, the automatic and "ironclad" commit-

ment to Israel's security that Biden endorses makes no sense.

Perhaps there was a time when extensive US support for Israel made some sort of strategic sense, but that time is long gone. Today, this support makes the US complicit in Israeli violations of international law, exposes the US to intense regional hostility, and puts US forces at greater risk in exchange for very little. When the Israeli cabinet isn't actively undermining US diplomacy with states in the region, it is openly ignoring Washington's preferences and defying Washington's requests. The US gets all the headaches and costs that come with foreign entanglement without gaining a reliable, constructive partner.

US officials have often called the relationship with Israel "unshakeable" and several presidents have taken pride in ensuring that there is no "daylight" between the US and Israel in public, and that is why the relationship has become such a bad, dysfunctional one. In practice, preventing any "daylight" between our cabinets has meant catering to the Israeli cabinet's preferences at the expense of our own position. The "unshakeable" relationship has remained that way largely because the US keeps indulging its client regardless of the consequences. It isn't possible to have a balanced, respectful relationship with any entity when the other cabinet expects and receives such extraordinary deference. Instead, it creates a toxic relationship in which one cabinet always takes advantage of the other.

Reflexive US backing for Israel has not only enabled the catastrophe unfolding in Gaza and implicated the US in war crimes, but it has also encouraged dan-



Iranians attend the funeral procession for the seven Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps members killed in an Israeli strike in Syria, in Tehran on April 5, 2024.
● HOSSEIN BERIS/AFP

turning point in the expanding Gaza conflict. Several countries have warned their citizens this week against travelling to the region. The war on Gaza, which has killed more than 33,000 Palestinians, has already expanded beyond the narrow enclave. Iran-allied Lebanese group Hezbollah has been exchanging fire with Israeli forces daily. The Houthis have been firing missiles and drones at Israel-linked ships in the Red Sea, demanding an end to the war, and a US-led coalition has been targeting the Yemeni group to stem its attacks. But the trend towards regional escalation appeared to have subsided somewhat after Iraqi armed groups halted their attacks on US bases in Iraq and Syria — at the request of Tehran, according to several media reports. A drone attack by Iran-backed Iraqi groups had killed three US soldiers at a base near the Jordan-Syria border. The US then retaliated with a series of strikes in Iraq and Syria, but the crisis was eventually contained.

'Pressure' on US, Israel

Now, the region is once again staring at the prospect of a widened conflict. "The pressure is now on Israel and the US rather than Iran. And yes, there are a lot of threatening remarks directed at Iran in the hope that the Iranians don't act. But the die was first cast by Israel," said Vali Nasr, a professor of international affairs at John Hopkins University. "And now people are trying to avoid what might be consequences." Biden does not want the US to be pulled into a war

with Iran, particularly as he seeks re-election in November. But Washington's default policy has long been to support Israel, Nasr added. "The American position is that they don't want the war to expand. They don't want to be dragged into a war with Iran. They don't want the Gaza war to become a regional war," he told Al Jazeera. "They may be saying things to Israel behind the scenes, but I think publicly they're trying to warn Iran not to escalate the war as well." But he added that every country has to contend with domestic politics in its foreign policy. "And in the United States, giving ironclad guarantees to Israel's defence is already a given." In Washington, Iran hawks are urging a forceful American response if Israel is attacked. Republican Senator Tom Cotton called on Wednesday for "joint American-Israeli retaliation" that would be "swift and devastating" to any Iranian military move against Israel.

'Obvious de-escalatory path'

For his part, Parsi of the Quincy Institute stressed that the best remedy to the simmering tensions across the Middle East is ending the war in Gaza. "In the broader picture, there has, of course, been an obvious de-escalatory path that has always been available to Biden, and that is to push for a cease-fire in Gaza," Parsi said. "A cease-fire would have stopped the attacks by Iraqi militias on the US, would have stopped the Houthi attacks, would have stopped the escalation between Iran and Israel and Israel and Hezbollah."

The full article first appeared on Al Jazeera.

gerous Israeli behavior in the wider region for years. Unconditional US support for the war in Gaza has led the Israeli cabinet to believe that it can keep pushing its luck with more provocative actions against regional states as well. Now, the Israeli cabinet is potentially facing some real blowback, and the US should want no part of it. US and Israeli interests have been diverging for decades, but US policy has failed to keep up. The president remains wedded

to a version of the relationship from the previous century with an entity that no longer exists. We need to bring US policy up to date and to bring it into line with the current realities of the Middle East, and to do that the US has to give up this idea of an "ironclad" commitment to Israel.

The full article first appeared on Responsible Statecraft.



The illustration depicts US President Joe Biden (R) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
● GETTY IMAGES

Israel versus Iran

What an open war between them could look like

By Anthony Capaccio
Reporter
PERSPECTIVE

The US and its European allies fear that an April 1 attack in Syria that killed several Iranian officers could push Israel and Iran to the verge of something they've avoided for decades: open war. Until now, Iran, with one exception, has used its backed groups to attack Israel, while Israel has avoided air strikes on Iranian soil. Now, Israel is bracing for retaliation for the strike in Damascus, a prospect provoking fears of a regional conflict.

How might a war between them be fought?

At this point, the two likeliest scenarios appear to be a missile barrage into Israeli territory, either from Iranian-backed groups in Lebanon, from Iran itself, or a swarming drone assault. A more remote possibility is that Iran could also direct the groups to deploy fighters on the ground from Syria or Lebanon. The details of Iran's current capabilities contained in a US Defense Intelligence Agency assessment released with little fanfare on April 11 suggested that any Iranian attack on Israel would likely be a combination of missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones.

with David's Sling air defense systems and perhaps with a system called Drone Guard made by ELTA Systems.

Allies, their possible roles

Iran's most important allies are the Shiite resistance groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen that it supports with money, weapons, and training. The Lebanese group Hezbollah would be positioned to play the most significant role. It's fought repeated battles with Israel and has been regularly firing missiles, mortars, and rockets into northern Israel since war broke out in October between Israel and the Iran-backed resistance Palestinian group Hamas. Hezbollah's arsenal contains more than 70,000 rockets and missiles, including long-range and precision-guided missiles, according to Israeli intelligence. An escalation of its attacks on Israel could test the entity's defenses at a time when it was also confronting Iran and Hamas. Iran's only state ally in the Middle East is Syria. The government of President Bashar al-Assad would be unlikely to be of assistance given that it's still struggling to gain control over the entire country following the outbreak of war in 2011. Iran has good relations with Russia, though its war in Ukraine would likely limit its ability to help, and with China, which has bought Iranian oil though it remains sanctioned by the US and allies. Israel has the US on its side. Already the US is



People walk by replicas of domestically-made missiles and UAV's in Tehran, Iran, in February 2024.
● HOSSEIN BERIS/AFP

"Tehran's missile force is increasingly augmented by Iran's UAVs and serves as the regime's primary conventional deterrent against attacks on its personnel and territory," the agency said. It added that Iran has a "substantial inventory" of ballistic and cruise missiles capable of striking targets 2,000 kilometers, or about 1,250 miles, away — putting Israel well within range. Israeli fighters would be expected to strike back, including those in its fleet of stealthy F-35I Adir and non-stealthy F-15I fighters. An F-35 made aviation history when the Israeli Air Force announced in November that it had shot down a cruise missile from the southeast headed toward Israeli airspace. Israel scrambled navigational signals over the Tel Aviv metropolitan area early this month in preparation for an Iranian attack, a showcase of its capabilities. Another likelihood is cyber war. More than a decade ago, malware known as Stuxnet compromised operations at an Iranian nuclear enrichment facility in what's suspected to have been a US and Israeli operation. Pro-Iranian hackers have also launched attacks of their own, including a hack that sought to cripple computers and water flow for two Israeli districts, according to the Council on Foreign Relations.

Israeli, Iranian military capabilities

Iran has massive stockpiles of cheap but effective weapons in its arsenal. It's safe to assume that Iran has hundreds if not thousands of one-way drones in its inventory to attack Israel. Israel would counter ballistic missiles with its Arrow interceptors and drone attacks possibly

expediting shipments of munitions to Israel, to help it fight Hamas. Among the US forces in the Middle East region are two Navy destroyers that moved to the eastern Mediterranean in early April, according to a Navy official: the USS Carney and the USS Arleigh Burke, both capable of air defense. Early in the Israel-Hamas war, the Pentagon moved its newest aircraft carrier, the Gerald R. Ford, and its battle group into the eastern Mediterranean. It has since returned home. The Dwight D. Eisenhower carrier strike group is on its way from operations against the Houthis. Each bristles with F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fighter jets and other advanced aircraft. In addition, 2,000 Marines were put on heightened alert for potential mobilization.

How might Arab states react?

An Israel-Iran war would put many of the countries in the region in a difficult position. Four Arab countries made peace deals with Israel in 2020 via the so-called Abraham Accords. Their distrust of Iran was part of what brought them together. But it's unlikely any Arab state would stand with Israel in a confrontation against a fellow Muslim country, let alone one as powerful as Iran. Iran and Saudi Arabia last year restored diplomatic relations after a seven-year freeze. Saudi Arabia has been exploring the possibility of normalizing ties with Israel as part of a broader deal in which it hopes to attain US security guarantees, and it would likely try to avoid becoming embroiled in the conflict.

The full article first appeared on Bloomberg.

Iran names 14-man squad for Futsal Asian Cup



Sports Desk

Head coach Vahid Shamsaei named Iran's 14-man squad for the upcoming AFC Futsal Asian Cup – starting Wednesday in Bangkok, Thailand. Prolific pivot Hossein Tayyebi will be the country's key absentee in Bangkok due to an injury, though his Mallorca Palma teammates Mohsen Oladqobad and Salar Aqapour were given the go-ahead by the Spanish Primera Division club to take part at the tournament, which is not part of the FIFA international calendar. Three-time Asian Futsal Player of the Year Aliasghar Hassanzadeh has again received a callout and will be back in the event after being snubbed by Shamsaei for the previous edition in 2022. Hassanzadeh, Oladqobad and Aqapour will be joined by goalkeeping duo Baqer Mohammadi and Saeid Mo'meni as well as Ali Khalilvand, Alireza Rafieipour, Mohammad-Hossein Derakhshani, Mohammadreza Sangsefidi, Saeid Ahmad-Abbasi, Mahdi Karimi, Ali Akrami, Masoud Yousef, and Behrouz Azimi in representing the most decorated Asian

side in Bangkok.

Having won the competition on eight occasions as a player, Shamsaei led his team to the final showpiece in Kuwait two years ago, but had to settle for a runner-up finish in his maiden tournament on Iran's bench after a shock 3-2 defeat against Japan.

Chasing a record-extending 13th trophy in the continent's flagship international futsal event, Iran will begin its campaign with a game against Afghanistan in Group D on Thursday. Shamsaei's men will take on Bahrain two days later before playing Kuwait on the final day of the group phase next Monday.

The top two of the four groups will progress to the last-eight round with the four semifinalists qualifying for the FIFA Futsal World Cup, starting mid-September in Uzbekistan.

Ranked sixth in the latest Futsal World Ranking, Iran will step into the Asian Cup on the back of a friendly tournament in Vietnam, where the Asian powerhouse fell to a 5-4 loss to Morocco but came out on top against the New Zealand (5-1), and Vietnam (3-1) to finish second to the African side.

FFIRI

Taremi finds scoring touch in Porto draw

Sports Desk

Porto striker Mahdi Taremi bagged his first goal for the club in 112 days during a 2-2 home draw against Famalicão in Liga Portugal on Saturday.

Introduced as a halftime substitute at the Estádio do Dragão, Taremi tapped in from close range with eight minutes left on the clock to draw Porto level for the second time in the match – the Iranian's fourth goal in the Portuguese top flight this season. The stalemate left Porto third in the table on 59 points – 15 points adrift of league leader Sporting, which has a game in hand – with five matches to spare.

Taremi had last found the net for the

Dragons in a 2-1 victory over Leixões in the Portuguese League Cup in late December.

The Iranian missed eight matches for Porto in January and February due to AFC Asian Cup involvement and then fell down the pecking order after returning from international duty – not named in the matchday squad for five league outings – presumably following the reports of the Iranian's imminent move to Serie A giant Internazionale as a free agent in the summer.

Having joined from Rio Ave in July 2020, Taremi has been Porto's talisman over the past four seasons, scoring 87 goals, while providing his teammates with 53 assists, in 175 appearances across all competitions.

He is the club's third all-time top scorer after retired Brazilian Mário Jardel (138) and former Colombian international Jackson Martínez (92). The Iranian, who will turn 32 in July, netted 22 strikes to finish as the leading marksman in the Portuguese league last season, but a below-par run, by his own standards, in the ongoing campaign has seen him bag only seven goals in 28 domestic and European appearances.



Porto striker Mahdi Taremi is seen in action during a 2-2 draw against Famalicão in Liga Portugal at the Estádio do Dragão, Porto, Portugal, on April 13, 2024.

GETTY IMAGES



Iranian girls learn fate in junior handball world event



IHF

Sports Desk

Iran was pitted against Romania, Brazil, and the Netherlands in Group A of the preliminary round in the 2024 IHF Women's Junior (U20) World Championship – starting June 19 in North Macedonia.

The complete fixtures list is yet to be announced by the international governing body of the sport.

Iranian girls booked their place in the 24th edition of the tournament thanks to a fifth-place finish in last year's Asian

Junior Championship in Hong Kong, joining champion South Korea as well as China, Japan, and the Chinese Taipei. The top two of the eight groups will progress to the main round of the world event, with the bottom two sides heading into the President's Cup to decide the 17th-32nd spots.

In its maiden participation at the event in 2022, Iran stood bottom of the preliminary group with two defeats and a draw against Guinea, before a loss to Italy saw the country finish 30th in the final standing.

Djokovic 'not having great season' after Monte Carlo loss

BBC – Novak Djokovic says he is "not having a great season at all" after losing to Casper Ruud in the semi-finals of the Monte Carlo Masters.

The world number one's 6-4 1-6 6-4 loss to Norway's Ruud follows a third-round exit at Indian Wells and a semi-final loss at the Australian Open.

The 36-year-old Serb is still searching for his first title of the year.

"Not having a title is, compared to the last 15 years, not a great season at all," he said.

"There are positives to take away for sure, but I'm used to a really high standard in terms of expectations and results."

Djokovic, who has an 11-4 record this year, also lost while playing for Serbia in the quarter-finals of the United Cup in January.

He will hope to win a record-extending 25th Grand Slam title at next month's French Open.

Against Ruud in Monte Carlo he double-faulted on Ruud's match point to confirm the result and end

a nail-biting deciding set.

Ruud cruised to victory in the opening set, ensuring Djokovic dropped his first set of the tournament, but the top seed fought back well.

The third set swung back and forth but having got himself back into the game on serve at 5-4 down, Djokovic double-faulted to hand Ruud victory.



VALERY HACHE/AFP

An image-grab from a video taken early on April 14, 2024, shows rocket trails in the sky above the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Al-Quds after an attack by Iran against Israel.

● AFP



Iran launches retaliatory strike on Israel

[Iran's] red line by the Zionist regime, which cannot be tolerated in any way for us," he asserted.

The chief commander of the IRGC also warned the Israeli regime that Iran's reaction will be "certainly much harsher" if the regime responds to Iran's operation.

"The Zionist regime must stop its past behavior and learn from this [attack]. If the Zionist regime shows any response, our reaction will certainly be much harsher based on this new experience we have gained from their capabilities," Major General Hossein Salami said on Sunday.

"From now on, if the Zionist regime attacks our interests, assets, figures, and citizens at any point, it will face counterattack from within the Islamic Republic of Iran," he added.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi hailed the operation, saying the hybrid operation taught the occupying regime an unforgettable lesson.

Raisi also warned Israel and its allies against any "reckless" actions after Tehran's attack, which marked the first time Iran has launched a direct military assault on Israel.

el for the attack.

During a speech in Tehran on Wednesday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said the Israeli regime "must be punished and will be punished" for the deadly strike on the Iranian diplomatic premises.

Iran defends operation
Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations defends the country's operation.

"Iran's military action was based on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter concerning legitimate defense in response to the Zionist regime's aggression against our diplomatic premises in Damascus," the mission said in a statement on Saturday.

"The matter can be considered as concluded," it added.

The mission, however, warned that if the Israeli regime perpetrated another mistake, Iran's subsequent response could be "remarkably more intense." The statement concluded that the conflict was one between Iran and the rogue regime, "of which the United States should stay away."

UN failure

Iran's Ambassador to the UN Amir-Saeid Iravani in a letter to the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the president of the UN Security Council Vanessa Frazier denounced the Security Council's inaction over Israel's actions. "Regrettably, the United Nations Security Council has failed in its duty to maintain international peace and security, allow-

ing the Israeli regime to transgress red lines and violate the fundamental principles of international law. Such violations have exacerbated tensions in the region and threatened regional and international peace and security."

Israeli Army on Sunday claimed that it and its allies thwarted 99% of the more than 300 drones and missiles launched toward Israel.

Israel said Iran launched 170 drones, more than 30 cruise missiles and more than 120 ballistic missiles.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the Israeli military spokesman, claimed that none of the drones and cruise missiles reached Israel and that only a few of the ballistic missiles got through. He said that of the cruise missiles, 25 were shot down by the Israeli air force.

Hagari said minor damage was caused to an Israeli airbase, but he said it was still functioning.

In Washington, Biden said US forces helped Israel down the drones and missiles and pledged to convene allies to develop a unified response. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said Britain's air force was also involved, shooting down a number of Iranian drones.

World's reaction

Global powers Russia, China, France and Germany as well as Arab states Egypt, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates urged restraint. Many countries, especially the western ones, condemned Iran's operation. Speaking to foreign ambassadors in Tehran, Iran's

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, said how is it that countries do not urge the Israeli regime to show restraint but wants Iran to do so.

Amir-Abdollahian said Iran had informed neighboring countries of its planned retaliatory attack "72 hours before the operation".

"We announced to our brothers and friends in the region, including the countries hosting American military bases, that our objective was only to punish the Israeli regime," he said.

"We are not seeking to target the American people or American bases in the region," he said, but warned that Iran could target US military positions involved in "defending and supporting" Israel.

Iran also summoned the French, British and German ambassadors to Tehran over reactions to Iran's attack.

"The British, French and German ambassadors to Tehran were summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs following the irresponsible positions of certain officials of these countries regarding Iran's response to the actions of the Zionist regime against the nationals and interests of our country," IRNA said.

Iran and Israel have for years been engaged in a shadow war marked by incidents like the Damascus strike. But Sunday's assault, which set off air raid sirens across Israel, was the first time Iran has launched a direct military assault on Israel, despite decades of enmity dating back to the Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

International Desk

Iran "concluded" a massive missile and drone strike on Israel to retaliate the regime's April 1 attack on its consulate in the Syrian capital Damascus.

The attack, launched by Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on Saturday night, targeted an Israeli intelligence center and an air base in the occupied territories.

The chief of staff of the

Iranian Armed Forces, Major General Mohammad Baqeri, said on Sunday that Iran concluded its retaliatory strikes on Israel and there was "no intention to continue this operation".

Baqeri said the attack has "achieved all its objectives". He said that Iran's strikes targeted an intelligence center and the air base from which the Israeli F-35 jets took off to strike Iran's consulate, which claimed the lives of seven members

of the IRGC, including two generals.

"Both these centers were significantly destroyed," he said.

Baqeri downplayed the extent of the operation compared to what Iran is capable of, saying that it was merely a punishment and the country's response to any further military action by the Israeli regime "will be much greater."

"The reason for this operation was the crossing of

Decisive response

"If the Zionist regime or its supporters demonstrate reckless behavior, they will receive a decisive and much stronger response," Raisi said in a statement.

Over the last two weeks, the Iranian authorities had repeatedly vowed to "punish" Israel after the death of seven IRGC members in Syria. Iran has blamed Isra-

Repercussions of crossing Iran's red lines



By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

In the early hours of April 14, when the sirens sound echoed in occupied territories, it became evident to everyone that the Islamic

Republic's promise of retaliation and punishment was not merely a political bluff. On April 1, when Israel's terrorist act in Damascus and the attack on Iran's consulate led to the martyrdom of several high-ranking military advisors, the Israeli regime and Prime Minister

Netanyahu's hawkish cabinet not only violated international norms and laws but also crossed Iran's red lines. This is how the desire and promise of "punishing the criminals" resonated in Iran. Negotiations, recommendations, and various threats to dissuade Tehran remained

futile as the passive stance against Israel's warmongering tendencies only fueled it further and heightened its greed for repeating such crimes.

Iran's complex and combined military operation, utilizing a considerable number of drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles, has now turned into the largest military operation of its kind. According to many political and military analysts, the mystique or taboo of an attack by a state on Israel and the presumed invulnerability of this regime have been shattered.

According to senior Iranian military officials, what Iran demonstrated in response was only a part of Tehran's defensive capabilities. The chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami, stated that this attack could have been "a widespread operation," but its scope was limited to the areas Israel had used to attack Iran's consulate in Damascus.

The chief of staff of the Ira-

nian Armed Forces, Major General Mohammad Baqeri, also stated, "In this operation, a major intelligence center supplying necessary information to the Zionists on Mount Hermon was targeted, as well as the Nevatim Airbase from which the attack on the Iranian consulate was launched. Both targets were significantly damaged and rendered inoperable."

With this description, Iran's objective of the April 14 operation was not to engage in war with the Israeli regime but merely to respond to its terrorist attack in a legitimate and deterrent defensive manner. Additionally, Tehran, unlike the Israeli regime, had no intention of targeting non-military sites in its strikes. Iran's mission in Geneva emphasized that Iran's operations against Israel were the exercise of its inherent right to self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter and in response to Israel's repeated aggressions, especially the attack on diplomatic premises in Damascus

on April 1.

Regardless of the narratives surrounding this operation and its repercussions, what imposes itself as a reality on every analyst and diplomat is that the Islamic Republic of Iran takes its interests and red lines seriously. Tehran has had sufficient legal and defensive confidence to overtly target objectives within occupied territories. Netanyahu and some members of his cabinet had previously threatened both defensive and offensive positions against Iran's actions. Some media and experts predicted Iran's response would lead to another Israeli aggression, but Major General Baqeri emphasized that we consider this operation successful. Major General Salami, commander of the IRGC, also stated that this operation was "more than expected".

In practice, reports indicate that Tehran has achieved its deterrent goal. According to CNN, Biden urged Netanyahu not to retaliate against Iran. Additionally, accord-

ing to a US government official, the US president informed the Israeli Prime Minister that he would not participate in any offensive operations against Iran. The New York Times also reported, citing two Israeli officials, that the option of an Israeli military response to Iran had been set aside after Biden's call. Since the Israeli regime relies on military and political support from the US and several European countries, it seems unlikely that it would have the audacity to attack Iran without this support.

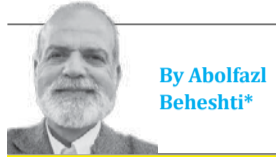
From Tehran's perspective, the matter is concluded unless Israel seeks to challenge Iran once again. As emphasized by the chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, we have no intention of continuing attacks, but if the Zionist regime acts against us, whether on our soil or in our facilities in Syria or another country, our next operation will be harsher. Now, Iran's red lines and the repercussions of crossing them have been reiterated to all.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran's military marvel



By Abolfazl Beheshti*

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Iran's response to an Israeli terrorist attack that destroyed the Iranian consulate in Syria and killed several senior military advisors, stands out as a groundbreaking maneuver in global military annals due to its scale and complexity. The unprecedented strike by Iran on Israel will undoubtedly etch itself as a historic emblem.

While Iran attacked Israel on its own, several NATO allies rallied behind Israel, even resorting to military measures to thwart Iran's drone and missile assault. The Zionists adhere to a doctrine that posits "the first defeat is the last defeat." The events of October 7 marked a significant setback for Israel, facing off against a popular-military entity rather than an autonomous government in the confines of the Gaza Strip. A host of military experts hail Hamas's Operation Al-Aqsa Storm on October 7 as a strategic feat and a military marvel, particularly given Hamas's enduring resilience. Consequently, in line with the Israeli doctrine, they encountered their first setback on October 7, followed by another substantial defeat with Iran's missile and drone strike.



Much like the events of October 7, Iran's response unfolded akin to a miracle. However, what resonated more profoundly, as underscored by Iran's top military brass, was that the recent operation only unveiled a fraction of Iran's military might, with a considerable portion of its deterrence capacity yet to be disclosed. The United States and European nations are aware

of this, evident through their media expressing apprehension over Iran's augmented might. Consequently, efforts are underway to spin the narrative in a manner that downplays Iran's achievements and underplays its response. Nonetheless, both Israel and its Western cohorts are gripped with dread over the Iranian strike. Claims or analyses suggesting that Israel would

retaliate against Iran lack credence. While Israel may resort to terrorist acts against Iranian interests abroad or within the country as part of an ongoing proxy warfare, a direct assault is unlikely. If Benjamin Netanyahu, a bellicose figure, entertains such a notion, the United States and other key supporters of the regime such as Britain and France are unlikely to grant permission, inter-

vening to avert such insane actions. Yesterday, news broke in the media that following Joe Biden's talks with Netanyahu on the phone and the US defense minister's discussion with his Israeli counterpart, Tel Aviv took the military option off the table. Israel's potential strike on Iran not only poses a threat to the regime but also spells trouble for NATO member states.

Israel's air defense system launches to intercept missiles fired from Iran on April 14, 2024. ● AP

These nations could face security challenges before backing Israel in its stand-off with Iran, given their past experiences. For instance, the West, spearheaded by the United States, once created ISIS only to have it turn into a security menace for Europe. It comes as no surprise that Western nations now grasp the necessity of assisting Afghanistan in combating ISIS to restore stability and security. Should Israel launch an attack on Iran, Europe would find itself embroiled in non-security-related tensions. Therefore, some analysts and political experts in Europe argue that distancing from Israel is the way forward.

One ramification of a potential Israeli assault on Iran will reverberate in the global economy. Iran not only has significant energy production capabilities but also holds sway over energy transmission routes owing to its strategic geographical position. Iran's decisions could substantially disrupt the global energy market, potentially leading to inflation and internal unrest in European nations. Hence, the media campaign pushed by Israel about an attack on Iran amounts to misinformation and fake news aimed

at diverting attention from Iran's military miracle. While attempts are made to instill panic in Iran through such a media campaign, the reality on the ground exposes the impracticality of Israel and its allies carrying out such an aggression. The US has repeatedly brandished the threat of a "preemptive war" against Iran, but this doctrine has lost its efficiency in dealing with Iran. If they could have acted on this hollow threat, they would have it six years ago. Consequently, the preemptive strike theory has become a relic of the past.

Contrary to Israeli propaganda, Iran has achieved its primary objective, which was deterrence. From a humanitarian and cultural standpoint, Iran's response served as a source of solace for independent nations and peoples oppressed by Zionism and authoritarian powers and weary of conflict, threats, and aggression. The scenes of joy sparked by Iran's military action in several countries underscores a key point.

The massive strike on Israel demonstrated that Iran, steeped in its rich history and cultural heritage, and imbued with the essence of Islam, holds the promise of fostering peace and advancement worldwide.

***Abolfazl Beheshti is a professor at a university in Brussels, Belgium and a member of a European think tank**

Israel's victimhood narratives coming to end

By Venus Q. Sarmadi
 Staff writer

PERSPECTIVE

It is concerning how Israel often seeks to portray itself as the victim in various political situations to justify its aggressive actions and occupations. This narrative of victimhood is frequently utilized to garner sympathy and support, deflecting attention away from its own role in perpetuating conflicts and oppression. This policy was evident even yesterday after Iran's legitimate defensive retaliations, where Israel continues to employ this rhetoric to justify its violations.

Iran on Saturday launched extensive missile and drone strikes against Israel in response to its attack on the Iranian diplomatic premises in Syria early this month, during which

seven Iranian military advisors were killed. The "punishment" attack was in response to Israel's repeated aggression against Iran and the UN Security Council's failure to hold the regime accountable for the April 1 attack. While Western countries condemned Iran's missile and drone attack, they were silent in condemning Israel for its raid on the Iranian consulate in Syria. However, global powers Russia, China, and even France, as well as Arab states Egypt, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates urged restraint. Adopting a policy of victimization, Israeli officials have again portrayed Iran's defensive actions as a threat to the world with its Foreign Ministry announcing on Sunday that the Islamic Republic's attack on Israel once again proves that Iran is "behind terrorist attacks in the re-

gion". It added that this is why Iran should never have nuclear weapons and the Islamic Republic must pay the price for its aggression. President Joe Biden, however, has signaled that the US, Israel's close ally, will not assist an Israeli counter-attack on Iran. He called a meeting of G7 leaders, apparently to coordinate a diplomatic response. Iran's overnight operation was purely deterrent as Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Tehran had informed the United States that its attack on Israel would be "limited" and for "self-defense". Israel's allies who are no friends of Iran but fear a regional war supported Israel in its defense. The attack from hundreds of missiles and drones, mostly launched from inside Iran, caused only modest

damage in Israel as most were shot down with the help of the US, Britain, France, and Jordan. Also, after the October 7 attacks by the Hamas resistance group, Israel employed a portrayal policy. However, its false victimhood facade has globally begun to erode in light of its crucial actions during the more than six months of war in Gaza. Since 1948, with the backing of the US and the UK, Palestine has been under Israeli occupation. The regime has consistently used harsh, violent, and inhumane methods during this occupation. However, it has disguised itself as a lamb in the woods. The Holocaust – the story of the murder of Jews by the Nazis in World War II – serves as a significant example of this for political gain. It is noteworthy that it had always justified its crimes against the Pales-

tinians in the name of the Holocaust, and today the regime uses it as a tool to justify antisemitism itself. In the days and weeks following the Hamas' Operation al-Aqsa Storm, Israel rode the waves of victimhood, committing their crimes and savagery. Still, its disproportionate response to the blow received from Hamas, caused public opinion internationally to doubt the validity of the Zionist narrative and their honesty in narrating the issue of Palestine. And the initial images of Israel under attack quickly shifted to scenes of Palestinian suffering. During this period, nearly 34,000 people were killed in Gaza, mostly women and children. The campaign has devastated large swathes of the besieged strip, destroying hospitals and displacing half of its population of 2.4 million. Prior to this war, what had

enabled the Zionists to gain support from certain governments and even nations, allowing them to continue their occupation, land seizures, and annexation of more parts of the West Bank, was their higher hand in shaping narratives at the international level. The Zionist media network has been able to fabricate and present false narratives of Jewish victimization, historical sufferings, and their alleged historical rights over Palestine in the past century. "These narratives, disseminated through media productions, have significantly influenced global public opinion. Some individuals even came to believe that Muslims had occupied the historical land of the Jews," Ahmad Zare'an, an expert on international affairs, has recently said. Consequently, the roles of the oppressed and the oppressor had been inter-

changed. While the end of the current war remains still unknown, in the unfolding process of the conflict and warfare, what is happening is the gradual triumph, or, at the very least, the emergence of the Palestinian narrative against the Israeli algorithm – despite its difficulty to be seen in the political arena. Over six months into the war, Israel is also facing a decline in international support, in stark contrast to the initial backing it received at the beginning of the conflict, even from its main ally, the US. On October 7, the initial support and unity with Israel from its allies, which was emphasized by a visit from Biden, has now changed to criticism and disapproval. With the US voicing increasing dissatisfaction with Israel's policy, the rest of the world is following suit.