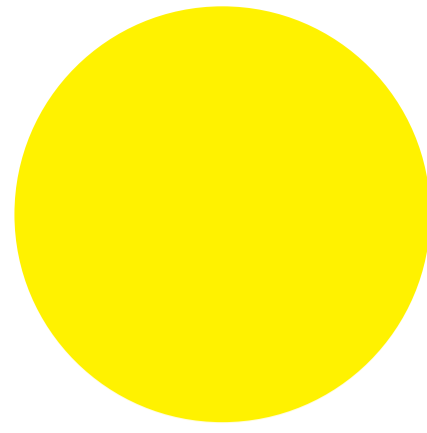


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No war on the horizon



By Ebrahim Beheshti
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OPINION

Israel's hard-right Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir weighed in on the recent incident in the skies of Isfahan, where Iran's air defense targeted several small drones. This sheds light on two key issues. Up to now, Israel has not officially owned up to its acts of sabotage or terrorism against Iran. However, a cabinet minister has tacitly acknowledged Israel's role in the Friday attack, leaving Tel Aviv unable to escape its responsibilities and the ensuing repercussions.

But the crux of Ben-Gvir's brief yet poignant response on social media platform X was his appraisal of the effectiveness of Israel's retaliation to Iran's extensive drone and missile onslaught on April 14. The hardline member of Benjamin Netanyahu's hawkish cabinet called the move "ridiculous and weak." His criticism aligns with the desires of Israeli hardliners, who likely anticipated a more forceful and overt retaliation from Israel.

Iran has made it clear that in the face of direct military aggression, it will hit back with even greater force than the April 14 strike. A day before the Isfahan incident, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told a Security Council meeting that Iran's "legitimate defense and proportionate countermeasures" had ended. However, he cautioned that Iran "will not hesitate to exercise its inalienable right to swiftly, decisively, and forcefully counter any aggression."

Iranian political and military officials have also taken similar stances. Simultaneously, other nations, notably Israel's allies like the United States, Britain, and France, have been leaning on Israel in recent days to steer clear of any actions that might ratchet up tensions in the region. Hence, Israel's response to Iran's strike, as per the official Iranian account, fell short of causing substantial harm to the military facilities in Isfahan. Moreover, the small drones used in the suspected Israeli attack were also shot down.

It appears that the recent Israeli action was meant for domestic consumption and possibly stoking a media campaign to shore up its tarnished security and military credibility rather than a decisive move triggering an immediate backlash from Iran.

While this act of sabotage is condemned and would prompt an appropriate response from Iran. However, it seems that Israel has acknowledged, at least for now, it must tread carefully with Iran and heed the advice of its key allies to avoid a direct confrontation with Iran.

Ben-Gvir's labeling of this Israeli move as "ridiculous and weak" suggests that Tel Aviv meticulously strategized an action designed not to incur heavy costs or provoke a sharp retort from Tehran. This indicates that, contrary to some speculations about an imminent direct war between the two parties engulfing the region and beyond, neither side currently harbors the intent to lock horns. Israel's Channel 12 TV quoted Netanyahu as affirming that Israel was not seeking a war with Iran and Iran has declared its retaliatory strike and legitimate defense in response to Israel's terrorist attack on its consulate in Syria as concluded.

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Iran oil exports hit six-year high

Iran is exporting more oil than at any time for the past six years, giving its economy a \$35b-a-year boost. Tehran sold an average of 1.56 million barrels a day during the first three months of the year, almost all of it to China and its highest level since the third quarter of 2018, according to data company Vortexa, reported FT. 2 >



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SPECIAL ISSUE



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Iran saw 2% decrease in the country's women unemployment rate, thanks to a growing trend in home-based businesses in the last Persian year ending March 19, Ensieh Khazali, the Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, announced. 8 >

Enchanting Hindu Temple of Bandar Abbas 3 >