

improved its skills at fighting war. In Syria, they gained new skills in urban warfare and intelligence. Its Special Forces unit is trained to infiltrate Israel in the event of a war that will surely provide ground for Hezbollah to inflict serious damage on Israel. Despite being out-matched, it is capable of inflicting considerable cost on Israel. Recently, Hezbollah published drone footage of an Israeli military base at the port of Haifa, exposing possible vulnerabilities in the country's air defense system. According to that video, potential

targets include Israel's main airport, Ben Gurion, power plants in Ashkelon and Hadera, the Leviathan gas field, a plutonium-based facility in Dimona, a large natural gas field in the Mediterranean Sea, and Ashdod. Besides, Hezbollah has exponentially expanded its arsenal and capabilities, including a widely expanded array of missiles, which experts believe are between 120,000 and 200,000, an anti-aircraft missile capability, and suicide drones, which Israel has struggled to counter. Additionally, in the second war

in Lebanon in 2006, Israel damaged Lebanon overwhelmingly, killing more than 1,200 Lebanese, including 250 fighters, and destroying 30,000 homes, 109 bridges, and 78 medical facilities, according to the International Committee for the Red Cross. Hezbollah could only kill 165 nationals of Israel. However, the number of Hezbollah fighters was 3,000 to 5,000, and they had short-range missiles to hit Israel. But, since then, the number of Hezbollah fighters has expanded to about 60,000, and it has

acquired rockets and missiles in huge numbers. So, it is obvious that if Hezbollah cannot defeat Israel, it can surely inflict a terrible loss on Israel. Notwithstanding that the Israeli military seems to be acquainted with Hezbollah's capabilities, many in Israel, including some far-right ministers, are pushing for military solutions over diplomacy. Even one of them gave the idea of reoccupying south Lebanon. The US seems unwilling to assist Israel in a full-blown war. As per US officials, it would not be able

to help Israel in a wider war with Hezbollah in an effective manner, as it helped Israel fight off an Iranian barrage of missiles and drones in April. In this regard, the US is continuously in talks with Israeli leaders and is warning against widening the conflict. Apart from this, the US is unable to provide adequate military aid to Israel to engage in an all-out war with Hezbollah. So, it is attempting to resolve the matter diplomatically. For this, the US's special envoy, Amos Hochstein, has made visits to the region to curtail any chances

of an all-out war. Greater war will not be affordable by both sides and the entire region since it will result in the devastation of much of Lebanon and major infrastructure in Israel. So, averting a greater war will be in favour of both sides. And it can help a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas because one of the core rationales behind Hezbollah's assaults is to stop Israel from destroying the entire Gaza.

The article first appeared on Pakistan Today.

Israel stoking all-out war

And Canada complicit



By Owen Schalk
Author

OPINION

Israel's genocide in Gaza is catapulting the Middle East, and the broader world, toward further destabilization. Only a few months ago, open war between Israel and Iran seemed like a possibility. Now, an all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah may send the region careening into further chaos and uncertainty. Following the Hamas-led October 7 attacks, military clashes between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Hezbollah along the Lebanon-Israel border have been nearly daily occurrences. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced. In recent weeks, however, things have escalated.

On June 7, Hezbollah declared that, for the first time in its history, it had used an anti-aircraft missile to force an Israeli jet to retreat from Lebanese airspace. As William Christou writes in *The New Arab*, Hezbollah's use of anti-aircraft weaponry is a "revelation". Christou explains:

Prior to the advent of the new anti-aircraft missile, Hezbollah's most advanced air defence feat was the downing of an Israeli helicopter in the 2006 war — something which does not require advanced weaponry. Hezbollah's possession of more sophisticated anti-aircraft technology would mean Israel could not conduct aerial sorties over the country with abandon as it previously had.

On June 18, amid intensifying exchanges between Hezbollah and the IDF, Hezbollah released a 10-minute video showing that one of its drones had covertly entered the northern city of Haifa, drifted over civilian areas, identified military targets, and returned to Lebanon. The message was clear:

The drone video proved to Israel that Hezbollah had the capacity to penetrate deep into its territory without being detected. Though this was a surveillance drone, the prospect of a suicide drone or drones carrying warheads hovering over Haifa has a significant psychological potency to both

the civilian residents of Haifa and the Israeli military.

The next day, Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah stated that the group had prepared a "complete bank of targets" in Israel should the war expand.

The Israeli military appears under-terred. Following Hezbollah's publication of the drone video, the IDF asserted that "operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon were approved and validated." Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz added: "We are getting very close to the moment of deciding on changing the rules of the game against Hezbollah and Lebanon... In an all-out war, Hezbollah will be destroyed, and Lebanon will be severely beaten."

Israel appears to be laying the groundwork for an attack on Lebanon, despite

aggression on Gaza."

Far from ending the genocide in Gaza, the Israeli military continues its brutal assaults on the besieged strip of land while retaining the military and diplomatic backing of many Western states, including Canada.

Over almost nine months, Israeli assaults have killed tens of thousands of Palestinians (disproportionately women and children) and displaced almost two million. Israel's vicious actions have prompted military responses from resistance groups across the region, including in Iraq and Yemen.

Canada has backed Israel against these resistance groups, especially the Houthi-led government of Yemen. In December 2023, Canada joined the US-led Operation Prosperity Guardian, a



Black smoke billows after an Israeli air strike that targeted a house in the southern Lebanese village of Khiam, near Israel's northern border with Lebanon, on June 21, 2024.

● RABIH DAHER/AFP

the fact that a war with Hezbollah would almost certainly create a multi-front conflict with allied groups in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, all of whom would receive substantial Iranian backing. The level of hubris is astonishing. Israel has been unable to defeat the Palestinian resistance in Gaza — despite its merciless onslaught against Gazans, Hamas is stronger now than it was on October 7 — yet the IDF is preparing for an all-out war against Hezbollah. Benjamin Netanyahu has even said, "We can fight on several fronts and we are prepared to do that."

To pull the region back from a wider war, the killing in Gaza must end. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said as much at the beginning of the year: "If the Americans had a brain... they would understand very well that security of the Red Sea, the calmness of the front with Lebanon, the situation in Iraq, all developments in the region rely on one issue: putting an end to the

failed mission to end Houthi strikes on Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea. One month later, Canadian Armed Forces personnel deployed in support of the US-UK bombing of Yemen. In a statement following the bombings, the government of Canada "condemn[ed] the reckless Houthi attacks against commercial ships and crew operating in the Red Sea". In February, Canada again participated in the bombing of cities in Yemen.

In April 2024, Israel's reckless decision to bomb the Iranian consulate in Damascus, killing at least eight Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officers and two Syrian civilians, almost led to a full-blown war with Iran. The Iranian government responded with a pre-announced strike on military targets within Israel, a reaction that sidestepped further escalation while demonstrating Iran's willingness to hit Israel directly.

Despite Israel's provocations against



The illustration shows Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (L) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

● BRYAN GEE/
THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Iran, Ottawa sided unequivocally with the Israeli cabinet. This is despite the fact that the Israeli strike also damaged the Canadian embassy, which, though closed, remains the property of the government of Canada. Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly could only bring herself to reference Israel's damaging of the Canadian embassy in the passive voice: "What I can tell you is indeed we have an embassy in Syria that was not occupied because we've closed this embassy, and indeed it is an embassy that has been damaged."

horrors perpetrated against Gaza.

Meanwhile, Canadian police have attempted to suppress anti-genocide activism. For example, a June 2024 piece in *The Breach* details an expansive police operation in Toronto to infiltrate and destroy protests against Canadian participation in the genocide of Palestinians. Under an operation titled Project Resolute, police utilized heavy-handed tactics to disrupt anti-genocide organizing, including "pre-dawn raids, snatching people on the street, trying to turn arrested individuals into informants, showing up unannounced at university lectures, and capitalizing on years of surveilling activist movements".

Since October 7, the Canadian government has participated in military assaults against Palestinians as well as regional forces opposed to the genocide in Gaza. Now, Israel's war is threatening to spill into Lebanon, and Ottawa is actively enflaming tensions through its participation in the war on Gaza and its refusal to pressure Israel to relent.

Rather than attempting to defuse the conflict (the first step of which would require Canada to end its participation in the Gaza genocide), Ottawa seems resigned to the prospect of a wider war.

On June 21, Israel Katz spoke with Joly, who told Katz that Ottawa had dispatched military forces to the region for "the largest evacuation we have ever undertaken". At the same time, Katz told Joly that, if Ottawa wants to prevent a wider war, she needs to "put pressure on Hezbollah's Iranian backers". Canada's foreign minister apparently did not object.

A few days later, Joly urged Canadians to leave Lebanon, stating: "The security situation in Lebanon is becoming increasingly volatile and unpredictable due to sustained and escalating violence between Hezbollah and Israel and could deteriorate further without warning."

In her statement, Joly does not mention the root cause of the "volatile and unpredictable situation" — Israel's violent assault on Gaza, in which Canada is complicit.

If the Hezbollah-Israel conflict spirals out of control, Canadians must remember that their government had myriad opportunities to end its military and diplomatic support for Israel and instead promote genuine efforts for regional peace. Instead, Canada has backed Israel to the hilt, helping push the region to the brink of all-out war.

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