

Araghchi: Any Israeli attack on Iran to provoke stronger response

FM begins regional tour to denounce Israeli crimes

International Desk

Iran warned Israel that any attack against its infrastructure will provoke an even stronger response amid threats of Israeli retaliation against Iran's attack on the occupying regime's military positions.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that the regime is fully aware of the wide-range of targets inside Israel that are within the reach of Iranian missiles, warning Israel against testing Tehran's resolve.

Araghchi was speaking at the "Al-Aqsa Flood; The Beginning of Nasrallah" conference in the capital Tehran on Tuesday.

"We tell the Zionist regime not to test Iran's resolve, as any attack on Iran will be met with an even stronger

response than before," he stressed.

"They have seen the power of our missiles with their own eyes."

He spoke after Israel claimed it was preparing a response to Iran's October 1 missile attack on the occupied territories, its second on the entity in six months. On Friday, US President Joe Biden cautioned Israel against attacking oil installations in Iran, one of the world's top producers of crude.

On October 1, Iran launched hundreds of ballistic missiles towards the Israeli entity's military, espionage and intelligence bases all over the occupied territories, inflicting damage on them.

The operation - dubbed Operation True Promise II - came in response to the

regime's assassinations of Hamas' chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, Hezbollah's leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan, an Iranian military advisory in Lebanon, in Beirut.

Regional tour

The Iranian top diplomat, who has just returned from his tour of Lebanon and Syria, said he will visit Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region starting on Tuesday to discuss regional issues and work on stopping Israel's crimes in Gaza and Lebanon.

"Our dialogue continues with regards to the developments in the region to prevent the shameless crimes of the Zionist regime in Lebanon in continuation of its crimes in Gaza," Araghchi said.

"Starting today, I'll start a trip to the region, to Riyadh and other capitals in the region and we will strive to have a collective movement from the countries of the region... to stop the brutal attacks in Lebanon," Araghchi added.

Nearly 42,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip as a result of the Israeli onslaught since the beginning of its devastating war on the Palestinian territory in October 2023. The Gaza Health Ministry says more than 16,000 of those deaths were children.

Alongside the fatalities, nearly 60% of buildings in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed since the beginning of the war.

Nearly two million Palestinians have been displaced by Israel's occupation army and face a grave humanitar-



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi addresses a conference dubbed "Al-Aqsa Flood; The Beginning of Nasrallah" in Tehran, Iran, on October 8, 2024.
● MARZIEH SOLEIMANI/IRNA

ian crisis.

Israel launched the war on Gaza after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas waged the surprise Operation al-Aqsa Storm

against Israel in response to the regime's decades-long campaign of bloodletting and devastation against Palestinians.

Israel has also since then

been targeting Lebanon. Since late last month, the regime has escalated its strikes on Lebanon, killing more than 2,000 people in the Arab country.

Hezbollah backs Lebanese efforts for cease-fire: Sheikh Qassem

Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem said Tuesday the Lebanese resistance group supported Lebanese efforts for a cease-fire with Israel, after two weeks of heavy Israeli strikes that killed its leader.

"We support the political efforts that (Lebanese Parliament Speaker) Nabih Berri is undertaking towards a cease-fire," Qassem said in a televised speech, according to AFP.

After nearly a year of cross-border clashes, Israel intensified its bombing campaign on September 23, killing more than 1,100 people and displacing over a million people since,

according to official figures.

A massive Israeli strike killed the party's leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut's southern suburbs on September 27.

"Once a cease-fire is achieved, diplomacy can look into all the other details," Qassem said on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Berri, a powerful ally of Hezbollah, have for days been striving for an immediate truce between Israel and Hezbollah, independent of Gaza truce efforts.

Qassem, who has taken over until a new Hezbollah leader is announced, said the group's mil-

itary capacities and leadership were still strong despite the heavy Israeli bombardment.

"The party's leadership and the resistance (Hezbollah) are meticulously organized... We have overcome painful blows," he said.

"I would like to reassure you that our capabilities are fine," he said, speaking of "hundreds of rockets" fired at Israel.

Since the Gaza Strip war began a year ago, Israel and Hezbollah have engaged in near-daily cross-border clashes, with Hezbollah saying it is acting in solidarity with its ally Hamas in the Palestinian territory. Prime Minister Ben-



Sheikh Naim Qassem

jamin Netanyahu and other Israeli officials have stressed the need to secure the north near the border with Lebanon so evacuated settlers can return home.

"(Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu says he wants to bring back" the displaced to their homes in northern Israel, Qassem said. But "we say that many more residents will be forced to flee" their homes,

he warned. "God willing, we will defeat Israel and it will not achieve its objectives. The Zionists were stunned after their army failed to advance on the ground in south Lebanon," he stated. Qassem added that an election for a new Hezbollah secretary-general would be held "according to the regulations" and the result would then be announced, but he did not give a clear timeline.

CIA chief: Iran, Israel not after 'all-out conflict'

International Desk

CIA chief William Burns said the US intelligence community believes neither Israel nor Iran wants "all-out conflict" as tensions between the two sides have increased in recent weeks over the regime's targeted killings of the leaders and commanders of the resistance front.

The CIA chief, however, said there is a large risk of miscalculation.

Burns said that Israel is "weighing very carefully" how it will respond to Iran's attack last week in which Tehran fired some 200 ballistic missiles, but warned there is potential for "misjudgments."

Speaking at the Cipher Brief security conference in Sea Island, Georgia, Burns said, "We face the very real danger of a further regional escalation of conflict."

Iran launched hundreds of ballistic missiles towards the Israeli entity's

military, espionage and intelligence bases all over the occupied territories on October 1, inflicting damage on them. The operation - dubbed Operation True Promise II - came in response to the regime's assassinations of Hamas' chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, Hezbollah's leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan, an Iranian military advisory in Lebanon, in Beirut.

The Israeli regime has vowed response to Iran's attack and speculation has focused on whether it might choose to strike nuclear sites in Iran. Referring to Iran's nuclear program, the CIA chief said there is no evidence Iran has decided to rush toward building a nuclear weapon.

Burns claimed Iran has advanced its nuclear program by stockpiling uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels. As a result, Iran

could quickly secure enough fissile material for an atomic bomb if it chose to and there would be less time for the outside world to respond, he said.

Burns said the US has closely monitored Iran's nuclear activity. "We don't see evidence today that such a decision has been made. We watch it very carefully," he said. Former US president Donald Trump pulled Washington out of the UNSC-endorsed agreement in May 2018, imposing severe economic sanctions against Tehran while Iran was adhering to its commitments under the deal and even continued to do so for a year after the US withdrawal.

Tehran scaled back its commitments to the nuclear deal in a series of pre-announced and clear steps after witnessing the other parties' failure to secure its interest under the agreement.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Araghchi's diplomatic efforts ...

It seems that Arab states are caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, weakening Hezbollah and Hamas aligns with their long-standing objectives except for countries close to the Resistance Front, such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen. On the other hand, the continuation of tensions and their potential escalation involving Iran would be detrimental to Arab countries. In such a scenario, Iran would likely target US interests in the region, leading to changes in the regional set-up that would harm Arab states.

Consequently, Arab nations will support efforts to weaken Hezbollah and Hamas, but will not back an escalation of tensions between Iran

and Israel.

Araghchi's regional tour will likely focus on diplomatic efforts to address the volatile regional situation and clarify Iran's stance on the Resistance Front and the need for peace.

However, another crucial variable is the United States, and whether its diplomatic efforts are in line with Iran's objectives.

It appears that ending the conflict would be beneficial for the Biden administration, particularly as the nation is headed toward the presidential election.

However, the US, like Arab states, seeks to undermine Hezbollah and Hamas. Hezbollah's influence in Lebanon's political spectrum has

been a major obstacle to US maneuvering in the country, and weakening the group would be advantageous to the US.

Another influential factor in the US is Benjamin Netanyahu's allies in the US political landscape, who are largely involved in Donald Trump's election campaign. Just as a cease-fire would be a boon for Biden and the Democrats in the November election, continued or escalating tensions in Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, and potentially the entire region would be a trump card for Trump and the Republicans. Therefore, it can be argued that Netanyahu's recent hawkish actions are, in part, aimed at supporting his allies in Trump's election campaign.