

Larijani: Defending national security beyond borders signifies Iran's strength

Iran promotes field preparation, active diplomacy as general policy

International Desk

INTERVIEW

the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Speaker of the Iranian Parliament for three terms, advisor to the Supreme Leader, and member of the Expediency Discernment Council.

"We live for peace, not for war." These are the words of Ali Larijani, a statesman with a remarkable record, including serving as

Larijani has recently spoken to Khabaronline journalists in two separate interviews about regional developments, including the escalating tensions between Iran and Israel, Iran's relations with the West, particularly with the US, the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), and the lifting of anti-Iran sanctions, as well as domestic issues.

He said that defending national security beyond borders is not a

sign of weakness, but a demonstration of strength. According to him, the country's stance on regional developments is rooted in its commitment to defending national security and interests. To achieve this, Iran must be fully prepared on the field and utilize its diplomatic capacities effectively.

In this section, the most important parts of these two interviews and the key responses are presented:



The mistake Israel makes is thinking that by eliminating a few figures, the problem will be solved. Those who are currently fighting in Gaza are not all [Yahya] Sinwar or [Ismail] Haniyeh; they are the youths who continue the holy struggle.

KHABARONLINE: The Leader [Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei] has made two key statements in recent weeks, coinciding with the escalation of tensions in the region and specifically between Iran and Israel: "Neither should we be sluggish nor hasty", "Neither should we underestimate nor overstate". Given your experience in both diplomacy and on the field, how do you interpret and analyze these two statements by the Leader?

LARIJANI: Everyone must acknowledge that we live for peace, not for war. War is a phenomenon that may be necessary at times, but everyone strives to minimize wars and avoid them whenever possible, instead opting for diplomatic solutions. This doesn't mean we compromise on our beliefs, but rather that we prioritize peace over war.

Reason dictates that we should take the path with the lowest cost. If that fails, we may resort to other methods. In the current situation, it's crucial to acknowledge that the Americans and Israelis have orchestrated this venture. In the recent aggression against Iran [October 26], it has become clear that the Americans have provided intelligence and equipment to the Israelis. Therefore, our opponent is the Americans, who openly claim to be standing alongside Israel. We have faced off against the Americans in the past, but the nature of this confrontation is different now.

The second point is that the developments unfolding in the region ultimately boil down to brutality. In Gaza, 50,000 people are killed. The world makes a fuss, but political leaders fail to take concrete action to contain the situation. We are faced with a malevolent force that seeks to fundamentally alter the regional landscape. Some say that Israel is at odds with the Arabs, so why should we get involved?"

We mustn't make this mistake because we are pursuing our own national interests. Of course, we also take into account Islamic and

humanitarian values, but national interests are the top priority. If someone thinks that these dangerous entities, which are currently causing chaos, won't eventually set their sights on other places, they have a misguided understanding of the situation. Even now, some Arab countries that usually criticize us and have different ideologies are worried about Israel, saying that once Israel finishes its work in one place, it will move on to another.

Israel's goal is to exert a profound influence over the region, which, if achieved, would leave little room for maneuver for other countries. This would be detrimental to both the region and our own interests.

Defending your national security outside your own territory is not a sign of weakness; it's a sign of strength. Of course, it has its consequences.

Now, with all this being said, what needs to be done? In my opinion, the Leader's words, that the recent incident [Israel's attack on Iran's military targets on Oct. 26] should neither be downplayed nor exaggerated as others do, hit the nail on the head. The military officials will provide their explanations in due time, though. Now, how should we navigate this path given the circumstances?

In my view, we need to be adequately prepared in the field, and we must also utilize our diplomatic capabilities effectively. The diplomacy that needs to be employed cannot be just a show; it needs to be strategic diplomacy.

This crisis will eventually come to an end. It is crucial that the essence of the matter is understood correctly and that the people are informed accurately, so they don't get the impression that the Islamic Republic is eager for a confrontation. The Islamic Republic is not interested in conflict, but it is prepared to defend itself.

In the trend we've witnessed over the past year and a half, and especially in recent

months, a large number of key commanders and important figures from Hamas and Hezbollah, as well as key advisors from the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), have been targeted. Do you think the elimination of these individuals through assassination, bombing, and other means will deal a blow to the existing structure?

It will certainly have a temporary impact, but we need to differentiate between two levels. In the short term, it causes damage. There's no doubt about it. And for some individuals, the damage will be long-term as well.

The mistake Israel makes is thinking that by eliminating a few figures, the problem will be solved. Those who are currently fighting in Gaza are not all [Yahya] Sinwar or [Ismail] Haniyeh; they are the youths who continue the holy struggle. There's a point that Westerners and Israelis often overlook.

The struggle we refer to as resistance - what does it mean? For us, resistance means that its core element is the holy struggle. The holy struggle is linked to the religious emotions and sentiments of the people. The question is, when you assassinate these figures, do these emotions disappear or intensify? They intensify. As has been the case throughout history. The same applies to Hezbollah.

Iran's delay in responding to the assassination of Haniyeh on its soil was due to the cease-fire that official authorities also con-



The flag of Iran is seen in front of the building of the IAEA Headquarters in Vienna, Austria, on May 24, 2021.

● FLORIAN SCHROETTER/AP

