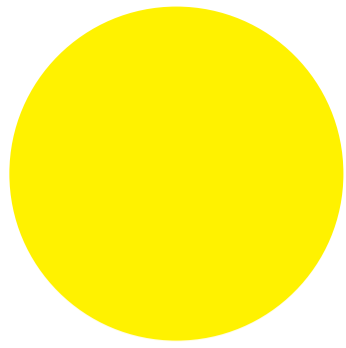


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Secret to Nowruz's endurance lies in respect for all humanity: Researcher

Nowruz belongs to whole world

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE



Nowruz, the festival marking the beginning of the Iranian New Year, stands as one of the oldest celebrations in Iranian history, with roots stretching back to ancient Iran and even prehistory. The origins of Nowruz lie in Greater Iran and the broader cultural sphere of the Iranian Plateau—an expanse that, during the Achaemenid Empire, encompassed vast parts of the Caucasus, Central Asia, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, as well as regions of present-day India, China, and even parts of Europe.

Given this extensive historical reach, it's no surprise that Nowruz is still celebrated across many of these nations and has even been enshrined as an official holiday in their national calendars.

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Breaking stereotypes, changing mindsets key to stronger ties:

Pakistani envoy to Iran

Ambassador Tipu calls for free trade agreement to help reach \$10bn target

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Pakistani Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassir Tipu speaks to Iran Daily during an exclusive interview at the country's embassy in Tehran. © SAJJAD SAFARI/IRAN DAILY



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Israel's offensive in Syria: Geopolitical ramifications, regional fallout of escalating crisis

By Hoda Yousefi
Middle East affairs analyst

ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVE

Between late December 2024 and March 2025, Israel's military strikes on southern Syria reached an unprecedented level of intensity and scope. The operations have not only reshaped the battlefield along Syria's borders and the Golan Heights but have also raised pressing questions about the future balance of power in the Middle East, Iran's role and resistance groups, and the prospects for stability in a post-Assad era. Citing "security imperatives" and the need to prevent advanced weapon transfers to Hezbollah and Iran-backed militias, Israel ramped up its aerial and naval strikes, wiping out 70% of Syria's military infrastructure in the south—including key bases in Quneitra and weapons stockpiles. These actions come as Syria's new

leadership, under Ahmad Al-Sharaa, attempts to carve out an image of moderation and pragmatism to gain international legitimacy. However, Israel's unilateral scrapping of the 1974 agreement and its seizure of 500 square kilometers of border territory have not only put vital water resources under its control but have also redrawn the region's security landscape in ways that may prove irreversible.

Military, geostrategic dimensions: From occupation to redefining borders

Israel's offensive in southern Syria goes far beyond a routine counterterrorism operation. Reports indicate that, deploying a mix of air and naval power, the Israeli military has taken out Syrian military bases as well as radar infrastructure and naval facilities. On March 3, 2025, a strike targeted a weapons site near the port of Tartus—aligning with Israel's claims about the presence of chemical arms. The attack followed a February 25 operation that struck Hezbollah po-

sitions in eastern Lebanon. On February 23, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu doubled down on his government's stance, declaring: "We will not allow southern Syria to become a new stronghold for jihadists... The complete demilitarization of this region is essential." The annulment of the 1974 agreement—previously overseen by UNDOF, which defined a 235-square-kilometer buffer zone—has given Israel free rein to take hold of Mount Hermon and other key border points. Beyond military considerations, this area carries strategic value due to its control over the Yarmouk River and the Golan watershed. In effect, by tightening its grip on these regions, Israel is securing both "border security" and "water control"—two pillars of its survival strategy. Meanwhile, Sharaa's insistence on adhering to the 1974 agreement and his stated reluctance to engage in conflict with Israel (as per his remarks on December 29, 2024) have done little to ease Israeli

concerns. From Israel's perspective, the lingering presence of the Resistance Axis (Iran and Hezbollah), coupled with reports such as the interception of arms shipments bound for Hezbollah on January 26, 2025, suggests that Syria remains a conduit for weapons transfers. Even Syria's January 17, 2025, crackdown on an alleged weapons smuggling attempt to Lebanon has failed to reassure Israeli decision-makers. On February 23, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Katz made it clear: "We will hold on to our military outposts in the buffer zone indefinitely... There is no going back to the pre-October 7, 2023, reality."

Regional fallout, future scenarios: Fragile stability or escalation?

While these operations have eroded Syria's military capabilities, they have also ratcheted up tensions with regional players such as Turkey and Iran. On one hand, Iran's Leader, during a January 8, 2025, meeting with Iraq's prime minister, underlined the "need to bolster the

Popular Mobilization Forces" and opposed US presence in the region—signaling Tehran's ongoing efforts to prop up the Resistance Axis. On the other hand, Turkey—wary of Kurdish territorial gains in northern Syria—may seize the moment to expand its military footprint under the pretext of "counterterrorism," potentially setting the stage for direct friction with Israeli forces. Inside Syria, Israel's actions have deepened the legitimacy crisis facing Sharaa's government. While some rebel factions near the border (including remnants of the Free Syrian Army and Druze forces) view Israel favorably, the destruction of farmlands and civilian casualties (as documented in UN Security Council reports on February 12, 2025) have sparked public outrage. Sharaa, who had urged Iran to respect Syria's sovereignty on December 24, 2024, now finds himself caught between mounting domestic pressure to push back against Israel and the need to court international support.

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