

A look back at Zionism's history, penetration strategy in Iran

Zionists pushed Iran infiltration since Nakba: *Expert*



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

The so-called 12-day war marks the first direct and conventional military confrontation between Iran and Israel since the establishment of the Zionist regime in 1948, a span of 77 years. Up until the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the two countries were close allies. However, the Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic drove a deep wedge between them, both ideologically and politically. The revolution's rallying cry of "defending the rights of the Palestinian people and liberating Al-Quds" stood in stark contrast to the Zionist vision of establishing and maintaining a Jewish state, known as Israel, in Palestine.

Despite mounting tensions over the years, Iran and Israel had steered clear of direct confrontation. Iran, for its part, threw its weight behind resistance groups in Palestine and the region, such as Hamas and Hezbollah. Meanwhile, the Zionist regime set up spy networks, carried out assassinations of Iranian scientists, and took steps against Iran's national security.

The 12-day war, however, heralded a new chapter in the standoff between Iran and Israel. It now appears that both sides are on a collision course, with direct military confrontation looming. Signs of this shift began to emerge a few months earlier, on October 7, 2023, when resistance forces led by Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel. This assault left many Israelis dead or captured and dealt a heavy blow to Israel's deterrence.

Roughly 20 months after that incident, the occupying regime, which had long beat the drums of war under the pretext of ending Iran's (peaceful) nuclear program, finally carried out a surprise operation on June 13, 2025 (amid ongoing nuclear talks between Iran and the US), targeting several of Iran's military and nuclear sites. If we set aside the deception and blatant violations of international law by the US and the Zionist regime — especially in striking Iran right in the middle of nuclear negotiations — the simultaneous assassination of several scientists and military commanders, using equipment that had been brought in and operated through infiltration, speaks volumes about the Zionists' years-long efforts to spy on and infiltrate various sectors in Iran.

In this context, Iran Daily sat down with Shadab Asgari, a writer, contemporary historian, and military affairs expert, for an in-depth discussion, the full text of which follows:



The Balfour Declaration of 1917 signaled Great Britain's support for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. It inspired the establishment of Zionist organizations in Iran like this one, the Zionist Federation in Iran, circa 1920.
● BEI HATFTSO/MUSEUM OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

IRAN DAILY: It seems the recent war reflects Israel's intelligence penetration into various sectors and the execution of a long-term plan to attack Iran. As a historian, what is your take on the roots and depth of Zionist infiltration in Iran?

ASGARI: That's correct. When the Zionists themselves and American military experts admit that the regime spent 20 years planning this operation, it's clear they had long-term plans to worm their way into Iran's intelligence apparatus. It would be naïve to think Israel's infiltration only sprang up in recent years.

To get to the bottom of Zionist espionage in Iran, we need to turn back the clock and look at history. The first Jewish activities in Iran date back to 1898, when a representative from the Jewish organization Alliance Israélite Universelle came to Iran, met with Mozaffar ad-Din Shah, and, by offering money and resources, secured permission to open the first branch of their schools in Tehran.

This school was established in Tehran in 1900. In the years that followed, similar schools sprang up in Iranian cities like Hamedan, Kermanshah, Sanandaj, Bijar, Nahavand, Tuyserkan, Borujerd, Isfahan, Yazd, and Kashan. These schools operated under the direct supervision of the Alliance's headquarters in Paris. Notably, due to their pro-Jewish nature, the prominent Shia

cleric Sheikh Fazlollah Nouri was staunchly opposed to their establishment in Iran. Among the notable alumni of the Alliance schools was Lieutenant General Ali Razmara, a top military commander during the Pahlavi era and a fierce opponent of the nationalization of Iran's oil industry. He famously questioned, "How can Iranians who cannot even make a pitcher hope to nationalize the oil industry?" This shows the kind of mindset these schools turned out. Zionism in Iran, according to some theories, was formally established in 1910 by a group of young Jews in Hamedan. The first Zionist newspaper,

"Shalom," edited by Mordechai Shalom, was launched on March 21, 1915. In 1919, with the Balfour Declaration commemoration, the Zionist organization officially announced its presence across Iran. Interestingly, their first congress in Iran took place on March 26, 1921 — less than two months after Reza Khan's coup, which toppled the Qajar government and paved the way for the Pahlavi dynasty. After declaring their presence in Iran, the Zionists sent their charter to the foreign ministry and Jamshid Jam, the then-foreign minister of Iran, and established contact with him. Jam, in October 1920, took out

a hefty loan of 500,000 tomans from the British Imperial Bank and handed it to a Bahá'í named Sho'a'ollah Alaei, then a treasury employee, instructing him to pass the funds on to the Cossack forces in western Iran so they could make their way to Tehran for the coup. There is ample evidence that Bahá'ís and Jews played a part in Reza Shah's rise to power.

The first — and perhaps only — Jewish doctor in Reza Khan's administration was Colonel Dr. Habib Levy, who headed up the dental service for both Reza Shah and the army. Dr. Levy, from a very wealthy family, worked closely with the World Jewish Agency



School children line up in queues at the Alliance Israélite Universelle, a Qajari school for Jews in Iran.
● safarnews.com



After declaring their presence in Iran, the Zionists sent their charter to the foreign ministry and Jamshid Jam, the then-foreign minister of Iran, and established contact with him. Jam, in October 1920, took out a hefty loan of 500,000 tomans from the British Imperial Bank and handed it to a Bahá'í named Sho'a'ollah Alaei, then a treasury employee, instructing him to pass the funds on to the Cossack forces in western Iran so they could make their way to Tehran for the coup.