

Iran slams US for violating Islamabad deal after air raids on southern coast



An F-35B stealth fighter jet is prepared for flight aboard USS Tripoli as the ship sails in the Arabian Sea. © CENTCOM

International Desk

Iran on Saturday condemned the United States for violating the Pakistan-mediated deal agreed to end the war against the Islamic Republic, after US air raids targeted several locations along the country's southern coast. "The US terrorist army's aerial strikes on Iran's coastal monitoring facilities

constitute a clear violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and a blatant breach of Article 1 of the ceasefire MoU," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The ministry also noted that "the Zionist occupation and apartheid regime [of Israel], in coordination with the US, simultaneously attacked Lebanon," which it said also constitutes a viola-

tion of the ceasefire agreement. "Iran will defend its sovereignty, security, and national interests with all its might," the statement read, emphasizing Iran's inherent right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter. The ministry said Iran's Armed Forces had conducted defensive strikes "against targets linked to US aggressor forces" in response to the attacks,

adding that "the responsibility for the consequences of this situation lies with the aggressor and covenant-breaking US regime and any parties complicit in its aggressive actions." The statement also called on all countries on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf to adhere to the principle of good neighborliness and to refrain from allowing aggressor parties to use their territory and facilities for attacks against Iran.

Transit through Strait of Hormuz

In a statement on Friday night, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that it had carried out assaults against what it claimed to be Iranian missile and drone storage sites and coastal radar positions in response to what it called an Iranian attack against a Singapore-flagged cargo ship passing through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran on Friday warned vessels not to enter or leave the Persian Gulf through the strait without its permission. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem

Gharibabadi said that any credible framework for maritime transit must be based on coordination with Iranian authorities and in line with Article 5 of the agreement signed between Tehran and Washington.

Hours after the CENTCOM's statement, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said its forces conducted retaliatory strikes, targeting "the deployment sites of the US terrorist military in the region".

"Should this aggression be repeated, our response will be broader than this," the IRGC said.

Bahrain on Saturday said that it was targeted by what it called several Iranian drones early Saturday, accusing Tehran of "sabotaging peace efforts". The US attacks came more than a week after Tehran and Washington signed a 14-point Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding to end US-Israeli wars on all fronts, including Lebanon, lift US sanctions, remove the US naval blockade on Iran, and restore commercial traffic through the Strait of Hormuz within 30 days.

Rescuers search rubble for survivors as Venezuela earthquakes kill at least 920

Over 50,000 people missing after twin quakes

International Desk

Desperate Venezuelans and rescue teams raced to find more than 50,000 people still missing after the powerful twin earthquakes rocked areas near the capital of the south American country on Wednesday.

Government said on Friday that 920 people have so far lost their lives and 3,360 people have been injured after the quakes devastated parts of Caracas and surrounding areas.

The first 7.2-magnitude quake was followed seconds later by an even stronger 7.5-magnitude one, according to the US Geological Survey (USGS), with both occurring close to the surface, making destruction more severe.

The ground shook once again Friday afternoon, a weaker 4.9 temblor that was felt in the capital Caracas and nearby Maracay.

The USGS estimated more than 10,000 deaths were possible, which would make the disaster one of Latin America's deadliest earthquakes of the last century. Nearly 7 million people could be affected, the UN's migration agency said, as it supplied emergency shelter and other relief items.

The United Nations' aid chief



Volunteers and relatives search for possible victims amid the rubble of a collapsed building following earthquakes in Caraballeda, La Guaira state, Venezuela, on June 26, 2026. © AFP

Tom Fletcher also said Friday that more than 50,000 people are missing, warning that the death toll was likely to "rise significantly".

Earthquakes of similar magnitude claimed more than 200,000 lives in Haiti in January 2010 and 73,000 lives in Kashmir in October 2005.

Frustration mounted over the uneven pace of relief in some of the hardest-hit areas including La Guaira state, where residents and volunteers were still digging through rubble by hand amid shortages of heavy equipment and limited official presence.

A UN report estimated direct damage from the two quakes at about \$6.7 billion.

Witnesses, traveled along highways cracked by the quakes and buildings reduced to broken concrete and twisted metal, said some ruins were spray-painted with building names to help rescuers identify locations.

Volunteers ferried supplies on motorcycles from Caracas and Valencia.

Despite initially thanking the volunteers, interim President Delcy Rodriguez and other officials later told people to stay away from La Guaira city because clogged roads were making rescue operations more difficult. They announced roads would be closed starting at 8 p.m. (midnight GMT) except to official and registered response teams.

Rodriguez, who took power after the United States captured her predecessor in January, has pledged a major relief deployment.

Foreign rescue teams began arriving late on Thursday into Friday in the country already weakened by years of economic sanctions imposed by the United States.

Iran's Foreign Ministry also voiced "Iran's readiness to provide any assistance required in relief and rescue operations".

Hezbollah chief: Lebanon-Israel deal 'null and void' for legalizing occupation

International Desk

Hezbollah leader Sheikh Naim Qassem condemned the US-Israel-Lebanon framework agreement on Saturday, saying it is a major mistake by the government and that his group deems it null and void.

The agreement - which includes a pilot effort in which Lebanese soldiers take control of two areas currently occupied by Israel, as well as a process aimed at disarming Hezbollah - was signed in Washington on Friday after five rounds of talks.

"The framework agreement in Washington is humiliating, shameful, and a surrender of sovereignty. This agreement is null and void, and the provisions of the Iranian-American memorandum of understanding must be implemented," Sheikh Naim Qassem said in a statement.

Qassem called on the government to withdraw from "its sins that are ruining Lebanon".

He accused Lebanese authorities of committing a "grave blunder" and "legitimizing the continuation of the (Israeli) occupation for many years," which "may even lead to the annexation of these lands".

Hezbollah strongly rejects direct negotiations between Lebanon and Israel, which have been ongoing since April. An April 17 ceasefire failed to

stop the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, but the violence has decreased since the US and Iran reached a memorandum of understanding last week.

Iran insists that any deal to end the broader war must include Lebanon.

Sheikh Qassem explained that the Islamabad memorandum of understanding was intended to guarantee Lebanon's security and sovereignty through a complete Israeli withdrawal within 60 days.

He described this provision as "a winning card in Lebanon's hands" that the government had never dreamed of possessing.

The Hezbollah leader also said that negotiations between the Lebanese government and the Israeli regime was a form of "gratuitous concession" to the Israeli regime and "a stab in the back of the resistance" in Lebanon.

He said that linking the withdrawal of the Israeli regime from occupied Lebanese territories to the disarmament of Hezbollah, as has been stipulated in the Washington agreement, is a "dangerous scheme that turns Lebanon into a toy in the hands of the enemy".

Sheikh Qassem said Hezbollah will continue to fight the Israeli regime and its occupation of southern Lebanon until the aggressors are expelled from the Arab country.



Israeli Ambassador to the US Yechiel Leter (l), US State Department Chief of Staff Daniel Holler (c), and Lebanese Ambassador to the US Nada Hamadeh sign a framework agreement at the US Department of State in Washington, DC, on June 26, 2026. © AFP

According to the text of the deal shared by the US State Department, Lebanon and Israel, officially at war for decades, expressed their intent to "conclusively end the conflict, address its underlying causes, and to therewith formally conclude any state of war between them". The agreement sets up a process during which Lebanon's military is due to "restore effective sovereign authority over all Lebanese territory, pending the verified disarmament of non-state armed groups".

Shortly after the deal was announced, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his forces will remain in occupied Lebanese territory "as long as Hezbollah has not disarmed".

Conspiracy behind Lebanon ...

So far, 180 villages in southern Lebanon have reportedly been occupied or destroyed by the Israeli army, and this is regarded as a serious threat to Lebanon.

In addition, Lebanon's constitution explicitly states that Lebanese governments should not negotiate with or sign agreements with Israel. Therefore, this constitutes a clear violation of Lebanon's constitution.

However, President Joseph Aoun, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam and Foreign Minister Youssef Raji are the three figures who, under the influence of domestic circumstances as well as pressure from certain Arab countries and the United States, agreed to this

course of action and signed the agreement with Israel. This could pose a serious threat to Lebanon's internal security.

Hezbollah has criticized the understanding. In your view, what are Hezbollah's primary concerns regarding this agreement?

Given that the Lebanese army fundamentally lacks the necessary capability to safeguard Lebanese citizens in the south, a responsibility that falls on Hezbollah, it appears that the next phase will involve efforts to disarm the group. This could represent a serious threat to the security of the Lebanese people, particularly those living

in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah will certainly not lay down its arms. However, there appears to be a plan to deploy forces affiliated with self-proclaimed Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa in southern Lebanon to establish a security belt for Israel. Israel, the United States and several Arab countries are reportedly consulting with Ahmed al-Sharaa on this matter.

This is considered a serious danger because any confrontation between forces affiliated with Ahmed al-Sharaa and Hezbollah could set off a civil and regional war.

If the understanding is fully imple-

mented, is a deeper rift between the Lebanese government and Hezbollah likely, or will both sides be compelled to reach some form of internal compromise?

The demonstrations that have already begun indicate that the majority of the Lebanese people and many political groups oppose the agreement. Hezbollah is certainly opposed to it as well, although it has so far exercised restraint. Nevertheless, Lebanese citizens are currently taking to the streets to protest against the agreement. So, a compromise seems unlikely.

What consequences will this agree-

ment have for the Axis of Resistance? Naturally, weakening Hezbollah means weakening the Axis of Resistance. This represents a serious threat to the Islamic resistance movements in the region, and that is, in fact, the very objective.

The purpose behind the Lebanon-Israel agreement is to disarm Hezbollah. After that, the same scenario could be rolled out against other regional resistance movements, such as Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq and Ansarallah in Yemen, with the aim of disarming them as well.

This is an effort to remove the Axis of Resistance as a whole from the region and from the struggle against Israel.