

Israel attacks Syria and Palestinians as an answer to anti-government protests

Jean Shaoul
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The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) have carried out a series of attacks against targets in Syria, criminal acts of aggression in defiance of international law.

Part of the US-Israeli covert war against Iran, they were carried out to support US imperialism's efforts to counter its declining economic and political position in the Middle East and to oppose Iran, which has intervened militarily to defend the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

With the Syrian regime backed by Russia, Israel's intervention is also directed at supporting the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine. It brings ever closer the threat of a broader military conflagration in the region.

According to the Syrian defence ministry, Israel launched "an aerial aggression from the direction of northwest Beirut targeting some outposts in Homs city and its countryside at 00:35 a.m." on Sunday. The strikes injured five military personnel, reportedly hitting the T4 air base west of the ancient city of Palmyra, as well as the al Dabaa airport near al Qusayr city. This is close to the Lebanese border where Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed bourgeois clerical group, is dominant. Reuters cited sources stating that Iran has military personnel stationed alongside Hezbollah at both airports, while pro-Iranian militias have a strong presence in that area of Homs province.

Another target, according to the pro-imperialist London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, was an Iranian facility suspected of developing missiles and drones, where several Iranian-affiliated fighters were allegedly killed.

Iranian state media said that on Friday, an Israeli attack near Damascus, the Syrian capital, killed two members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). In a statement issued Sunday, the Revolutionary Guards said, "The crimes of the Zionist

regime will not go unanswered and they will pay for this."

Friday's attack followed missiles being fired from the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights on targets outside Damascus on the nights of March 30 and 31. While Syrian air defences downed some of the missiles, the strikes injured five Syrian soldiers and caused material damage.

It was Israel's sixth attack on Syria in March, with two separate attacks on Aleppo's international airport and another on a weapons depot in central Syria that killed a Syrian officer and two Iranian-backed fighters. It follows hundreds of attacks on Syria since the start of the CIA-led proxy war in 2011 to topple the Assad regime, a key Iranian ally. While the IDF originally targeted Hezbollah's arms convoys, it later extended to Syrian government forces, Iranian-backed fighters and Hezbollah, as well as weapons-production sites, with Israel insisting that it would not allow Iran to operate near its borders.

Syria's civilian airports, including Damascus International Airport, and residential neighbourhoods, have been hit. The attacks on Aleppo's airport are particularly criminal as it has been one of the main entry points for international aid trying to reach earthquake-hit zones in northern Syria. February's catastrophic earthquake that struck Turkey has killed nearly 60,000 people, including around 8,500 in Syria, although the number of unreported cases is likely to be far higher than official figures. Millions are suffering from homelessness, hunger and terrible weather conditions in northwest Syria, with many people forced to live in emergency shelters or tents.

Friday's attack indicates that Israel is now directly targeting the IRGC, which has taken increasing control of Iran's foreign policy. Tel Aviv has accused the

IRGC of funding both Hamas—the clerical group that controls Gaza, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad—as well as Hezbollah. Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said recently, “We openly declare our support for the resistance front,” a reference to the groups opposing Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land.

The IDF has refused to comment on the reported strikes in Syria, the third since Thursday. However, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday, without referring to any specific targets or strikes, that Israel is “exacting a heavy price from the regimes that support terrorism beyond Israel’s borders.”

Israel’s attacks on Syria, undoubtedly coordinated with the Biden administration, support Washington’s broader predatory interests in the region, but also reflect the increasing political turmoil within Israel itself.

Last Monday night, Netanyahu, in the face of the largest outpouring of popular opposition in Israel’s 75-year history, announced a temporary halt to his plans for a coup against the country’s judicial system. The mass walkout of workers on Sunday and Monday in opposition to his fascist government has brought Israel, as Netanyahu admitted, to the brink of “civil war.” It has been fuelled by Israel’s immense economic inequality, its myriad social problems and the impact of the global capitalist crisis.

It creates the ever-greater risk that Netanyahu will take dangerous military action to create some kind of national “unity” and deflect political tensions outward towards Iran. He would be following the example provided by the US and NATO, which have incited the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine in large part to divert their mounting internal tensions towards a foreign adversary.

Netanyahu is also whipping up tensions in the occupied West Bank, in East Jerusalem and among Israel’s own Palestinian citizens. On Saturday, Israeli police shot and killed Mohammed al-Asibi—a young Israeli Palestinian resident of the Bedouin town of Hura in southern Israel who had just completed his medical studies—at the Chain Gate entrance to the al-Aqsa mosque compound in East Jerusalem. Police claim he had snatched a gun from an officer and fired it at other officers. Witnesses say he had in fact gone to help a woman involved in an altercation with the police and

that the police shot him 10 times.

With the police unable to produce any CCTV footage confirming their version of events, an umbrella group of Arab leaders declared a one-day general strike across Israel in protest at the cold-blooded execution. Rallies would be held along with a mass protest during al-Asibi’s funeral against “all occupation policies, oppression and racial discrimination.”

Hours later, Israeli soldiers shot and killed Mohammed Baradyeh, a 23-year-old Palestinian motorist near the town of Beit Ummar, north of Hebron in the West Bank, following what they said was his attempt to ram his car into a group of soldiers. It brings to at least 88 the number of Palestinians and one Palestinian Israeli killed by Israeli security forces and settlers since the start of the year and raises fears of bloodshed during Ramadan—especially around the al-Aqsa mosque compound as Israel tightens restrictions against Palestinians in the area.

Tensions are particularly acute in the wake of the plans announced Monday that the government is preparing to establish a National Guard, a reservist paramilitary force to be used within Israel. Originally proposed by the previous government, it will be under the direct control of Jewish Power leader and Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir. This, along with new legislation that enables the homes of Palestinian Israelis to be searched without a warrant, will give the authorities the power to storm and search Palestinian homes at will.

It will become yet another weapon in the armoury of the far-right against Israel’s own Palestinians that Ben Gvir and ultra-nationalist and fascist allies have for years called to be subjected to “population transfers,” meaning ethnic cleansing. It is aimed at preventing the mass protests and riots that broke out in Israel’s predominantly Arab and mixed cities in May 2021 following the pogrom-like provocations by his vigilante groups as the police turned a blind eye, with the ultimate objective of driving them from their homes.



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