

Turkey's foreign minister warns of "risk of spreading war" from Gaza to wider region

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The danger of the Israeli genocide in Gaza, which is unconditionally backed by US imperialism and its European allies, turning into a region-wide war is growing.

"The spread of war is a serious risk," Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told reporters on Wednesday, warning NATO and other Israeli allies of the consequences of regional escalation.

Fidan's comments came amid escalating tensions in the Middle East. On Tuesday, Hamas deputy head Saleh al-Arouri was assassinated in the Lebanese capital Beirut. On Wednesday, bomb attacks in the Iranian city of Kerman killed 84 people at a memorial service for General Qassem Soleimani, who was killed by the US four years ago while on a diplomatic mission in Iraq.

"We are deeply saddened by the heinous terrorist attacks in Iran's Kerman province... I send my condolences to the friendly and brotherly Iranian people," President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said on X/Twitter after the attack.

Israel has not officially claimed responsibility for such attacks, but it is no secret that it carries out illegal assassinations in Iran and across the region. These latest attacks come on the heels of Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant's recent declaration, "We are in a multi-front war. We are being attacked from seven fronts—Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Judea and Samaria [the West Bank], Iraq, Yemen and Iran."

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained, the Israeli genocide in Gaza has given impetus to Washington's preparations for war to establish its domination in the Middle East, targeting in particular Iran and its allies.

In connection with Israel's war against the Palestinians, preparations are being finalised for an operation against the Houthis in Yemen in order to "secure" the Red Sea. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the US military has

"prepared options" for attacking Yemen. It wrote that "potential targets could include launchers for antiship missiles and drones, targeting infrastructure such as coastal radar installations, and storage facilities for munitions."

On this issue, Fidan said, 'Now the activity in the Red Sea, especially on the trade routes... America's efforts to form an alliance with the West on the grounds that 'we want to get this under control'... .. The issue of a naval alliance and the launch of a joint operation for this purpose... This is precisely the issue of escalation, i.e., regional expansion, to which we have drawn attention. This question of regional expansion, of spreading the war, is a serious risk.'

Regarding the attack in Lebanon, Fidan said that the target of this operation was not only Hezbollah, but Lebanon itself. He added that "the Israelis are trying very hard not to go to war with Lebanon."

Among his most striking remarks were his warnings to NATO allies about the consequences of a regional war: "Every country must learn hard lessons from this. There will be those who think that alliances are so useless that if the same thing happens to them tomorrow, no one will do anything."

He continued, "The unconditional support of the US or some Western countries for Israel is a serious problem. In an equation where the US is fighting on behalf of Israel, the countries in the region will want to develop a counterforce. I think that those who do not want the kind of massacres in Gaza to happen again may start looking for rearming and power."

Ankara fears that it could be drawn into such a war against Iran, which would undermine its interests. Turkey and Iran share a long border that has remained unchanged for almost four centuries. Turkey is home to a number of US and NATO bases, including Incirlik Air Base in Adana and the Kürecik Radar Base in Malatya. In the

event of a war between the US and Iran, these bases could become flashpoints.

Turkey and Iran also share the Kurdish question. The Turkish bourgeoisie fears that a victory for Washington and Tel Aviv in a war in the Middle East could lead to the creation of a Kurdish state. During NATO's regime-change war against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Kurdish nationalists have become the main proxy force of Washington.

Against this backdrop, and shortly after the assassination of al-Arouri in Beirut, 34 people were detained in Turkey on Tuesday for allegedly carrying out "international espionage" activities on behalf of Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence service. In early December, unnamed Turkish intelligence (M?T) officials told Reuters and Anadolu Agency that they would not tolerate Mossad targeting Hamas leaders in Turkey.

Before October 7, Ankara had renormalized its relations with the Netanyahu government in the interests of exploiting oil and gas reserves in the eastern Mediterranean. The Erdoğan government fears that the Gaza genocide will disrupt plans to seize and share these Palestinian resources.

Such concerns are the basis for the Turkish government's calls for restraint, mediation initiatives and warnings against ongoing US-NATO support for Israel's massacres since October 7.

Fidan's remarks expose the dilemma and hypocrisy of the Turkish ruling class, which has close ties with imperialism and Israel and has been defending its interests in foreign policy through NATO for decades.

In late December, during Israel's NATO-backed genocide in Gaza, the Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee, with Erdoğan's endorsement, sent Sweden's application for NATO membership to parliament for approval. Ankara also maintains Turkey's critical trade with Israel, including steel and fuel, and refuses to impose any sanctions.

According to the Turkish Trade Ministry, exports to Israel, which totaled \$319.5 million in November, rose by 35 percent to \$430.6 million in December. This figure is even higher than exports of \$408.3 million in July. However, Trade Minister Ömer Bolat said in mid-December that "Turkey's foreign trade with Israel has fallen by 48 percent since October."

This support for the Israeli genocide is covered up with rhetorical condemnations and symbolic protests and boycotts. On January 1, hundreds of thousands of people protested in Istanbul against both the Kurdistan Workers'

Party (PKK) and Israel, in demonstrations called by pro-government organisations and members of Erdoğan's family.

Ankara accuses Israel of attacks targeting civilians and illegal assassinations that violate international law, but it uses similar methods. The Turkish army and intelligence services recently against the PKK and its Syrian ally, People's Protection Units (YPG) militias in Iraq and Syria, whose governments considers this a violation of their sovereign rights.

Fidan declared they would continue these illegal operations even if the Iraqi and Syrian governments did not authorise them, stating, "We tell them [Iraqi officials] that if you want, you can solve it, if you want, we can solve it together. Let us solve it, so we will continue to fight. Whether you want to or not. We have no problem with that. We are clear about that."

The tensions between Ankara and Tel Aviv have manifested themselves in mutual accusations of genocide and massacres. Last week, Netanyahu took to X/Twitter to respond to Erdoğan's comparison of him to Hitler, saying, "Erdoğan, who commits genocide against the Kurds, who holds a world record for imprisoning journalists who oppose his rule, is the last person who can preach morality to us."

He added, "The [Israel Defense Forces] is the most moral army in the world that fights and destroys the most abhorrent and cruel terrorist organization in the world, Hamas-ISIS, which committed crimes against humanity and which Erdoğan praises and hosts their senior officials."

Israel's genocide in Gaza and its preparations for war together with its NATO allies against Iran cannot be stopped by complicit bourgeois leaders such as Erdoğan. The slide towards catastrophe can only be prevented if the workers of the Middle East unite with their class brothers and sisters in Europe, the US and around the world on the basis of an international socialist programme against imperialism and its regional proxies.



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