

Latin America drawn into Middle East conflict amid warnings of “Third World War”

Andrea Lobo
19 April 2024

The Israeli-provoked military conflict with Iran is dragging Latin America further into the spiral of an emerging world war.

On Saturday, Iran launched more than 300 drones and missiles against Israel in response to the bombing of its embassy in Damascus that killed seven top Iranian military officers. US, British, French, Lebanese and Saudi forces repelled most of the Iranian attack, but Israeli officials have decided on further escalating the conflict. Israel, on Friday, attacked Iran itself, striking a military base with drones.

The most striking response in Latin America came from fascist President Javier Milei of Argentina, who created a Crisis Committee composed of cabinet members and the Israeli ambassador in Buenos Aires, Eyal Sela.

Milei cut short a trip to Denmark, where his government bought F-16 fighter jets, and returned to Buenos Aires, “to take charge of the situation and coordinate actions with the presidents of the Western world,” according to his spokesperson.

The Milei administration recently committed to a “strategic alliance” with the Pentagon and formally requested Thursday to become a NATO “global partner,” a status held only by Colombia in the region. After Milei visited Israel to back its genocide in Gaza, CIA director William Burns and then US Southern Command chief Laura Richardson made visits to Argentina.

Now, Milei is using the Israeli aggression against Iran to cement his regime’s role as cockpit for US imperialist conspiracies in the region, clearly aspiring to the role played by Israel in the Middle East.

Giving an indication of what was being concocted by the “Crisis Committee,” Argentine Security Minister Patricia Bullrich went on national television to claim, without a shred of evidence, that there are 700 members

of Iran’s Quds Force in Bolivia, suggesting they are being given Bolivian passports.

Argentina and Ecuador were the only two Latin American countries to sign a US-led statement issued on Wednesday denouncing “unequivocally” Iran’s attack on Israel. Such condemnations are a sign of total subservience to US imperialism and its hypocrisy, with Washington having long asserted its right to slaughter whomever it considers an obstacle to its interests.

Ecuador’s President Daniel Noboa separately declared, “Ecuador’s full support to the people of Israel in these difficult times.” His vice president, Verónica Abad, is currently in Israel as part of a so-called “Peace Mission.”

Chile’s pseudo-left President Gabriel Boric, who also supports the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, issued a separate but equally subservient statement “condemning Iran’s missile and drone attacks on Israel.”

In Venezuela, several right-wing media outlets have made unfounded claims that the Nicolas Maduro administration was directly complicit in the Iranian attack. Meanwhile, the US-backed opposition has used the Iranian attack to promote regime change.

Fascistic opposition leader María Corina Machado declared: “This unprecedented and unacceptable action once again raises our denunciation of the risk represented by Iran’s alliance with the Venezuelan regime... Venezuela’s return to democracy and its reinsertion into the free world will contribute to mitigating this risk.”

Maduro blamed the Iran-Israel conflict on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and “US support,” and warned: “An escalation of the conflict, a product of Netanyahu’s Nazi madness, could lead us to a third world war, and Venezuela advocates peace, rationality, diplomacy and truth.”

This followed the decision by White House officials to

reimpose full sanctions on Venezuelan oil exports, after failing to strong arm the Maduro regime into allowing Washington's preferred candidate, Corina Machado, to run in the presidential elections planned for July. At the same time, the US has continued to give separate licenses to US-based oil companies "on a case-by-case basis," establishing an effective stranglehold on Venezuela's most important source of income.

But having denounced Washington for supporting fascism and provoking a Third World War, Maduro also said on Monday that he will "never close the door on dialogue."

"I told negotiators to give President Biden the following message 'If you want, I want. If you don't want, I don't want,'" he said in broken English.

In a press briefing, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Iran's attack was a response to Israel's bombing of the Iranian embassy and asked Israel not to retaliate. "It's going to be escalating the conflict to a very risky situation," he said.

His administration has refused to condemn any side—including Israel for the Gaza genocide and its provocative aggression against Iran—and proposed "more UN activity" for "peace" and "universal fraternity."

In Brazil, President Lula da Silva, who was declared a "persona non grata" by Israel after he likened the slaughter in Gaza to the Holocaust, merely called for all sides to avoid escalation. According to *O Globo*, his government is using diplomatic channels to advocate against an Israeli reprisal.

Lula has also called for a ceasefire in Gaza but, like López Obrador, has upheld Israel's supposed "right of self-defense" and promoted the moribund "two-state solution," which has historically served as a fraudulent cover for the continued expansion of Israeli settlements and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians.

The Bolivian government of President Luis Arce, who had broken diplomatic relations with Israel over its genocide in Gaza, responded to the Iranian attack by calling on the UN to intervene, and warning that "escalating global violence puts humanity at risk of extinction."

Colombia's pseudo-left President Gustavo Petro similarly warned: "It was foreseeable; we are now on the verge of World War III... The US support, in practice, for genocide has set the world ablaze." Petro has, notwithstanding, vowed to "consolidate" his government's status as a "NATO global partner" and had no better proposal than to ask the UN to "to bet

immediately on Peace."

The Middle East crisis has once again exposed the United Nations as a "thieves' kitchen" at the service of imperialism and a "lie from beginning to end," as Lenin described its predecessor, the League of Nations. It has not only failed to stop any of the US-led wars of aggression globally since its creation but has actively provided a pseudo-legal cover for many of them.

While Latin America's far-right regimes act as provocateurs in direct coordination with the CIA, the supposed "anti-imperialist" and "pacifist" policies of the "pink tide" governments are entirely bankrupt, reduced to a futile bid to pressure the imperialist powers to be less predatory.

Lula, AMLO, Maduro and company represent the interests of sections of the bourgeoisie which are trying to leverage trade and diplomatic ties with China, Russia, and, to a lesser extent, Iran. Their alarm over a potential nuclear world war is all the more significant given their unconditional defense of capitalism and ultimate subordination to imperialism.

Economic globalization and the weakened hegemony of US imperialism have made Latin America a key battleground in the new redivision of the planet. For Washington, the region's strategic natural resources and supply chains for key US industries, including arms manufacturers, must be secured from Chinese and even European rivals. Moreover, it finds it necessary to draw the larger militaries (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and Chile), whose forces and influence it has long cultivated, actively into its warring camp.

Recently announcing the deployment of the US 4th Fleet with the aircraft carrier USS George Washington in joint exercises and operations across South America, the Pentagon boasted that its sailors "are ready to control the sea, conduct strikes, and maneuver across the electromagnetic spectrum and cyberspace."



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact