

Israeli strike on Iran expands Middle East war

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On Friday morning, Israel carried out an airstrike on a military base in central Iran near one of its nuclear facilities, further widening the war in the Middle East instigated by the imperialist powers.

After decades of proxy conflicts throughout the Middle East, Israel and Iran have now each exchanged fire against one another from their own territory, setting a precedent for further escalation.

Neither Iranian nor Israeli officials have admitted to the existence of the strikes, which were announced to the American press Thursday by White House sources on background.

Commenting on the significance of the Thursday night's attack, the aggressively pro-war *Wall Street Journal* wrote, "The strike is a message to Iran that Israel has the military capability to hit deep in its homeland, and not merely its proxy forces in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Israel also showed it could hit a target near a nuclear facility despite the presence of the Russian S-300 missile defense system."

The *New York Times*, for its part, wrote, "The taboo against direct strikes on each other's territory was now gone. If there is another round - a conflict over Iran's nuclear advances, or another strike by Israel on Iranian military officers - both sides might feel more free to launch directly at the other."

The article concluded, "The signal sent by the decision to hit a conventional military target in Isfahan was clear: Israel demonstrated that it could pierce Isfahan's layers of air defenses, many of them arrayed around key sites like the Isfahan uranium conversion facility."

Friday's strike was the latest measure in a wave of escalation following Israel's April 1 attack on an Iranian consulate in Syria that killed seven high-ranking Iranian military figures.

US officials effectively endorsed the April 1 Israeli strike, with US deputy ambassador to the UN Robert

Wood declaring that the consulate was in fact a terrorist base.

After Iran retaliated against the strike on its consulate with an attack on an Israeli military base, the United States and its imperialist allies condemned Iran, imposed sanctions on it, and vowed effectively limitless support for Israel.

In the subsequent week, US officials repeatedly made clear that a potential Israeli strike on Iran is "an Israeli decision to make," effectively granting Israel a blank check to attack Iran.

Notably, the strike took place just hours after the conclusion of a high-level US-Israeli discussion dealing with both Israel's planned strike on Iran and its plans to assault Rafah, where over one million Palestinians are sheltering.

In its readout of the meeting, the White House declared, "The two sides agreed on the shared objective to see Hamas defeated in Rafah. US participants expressed concerns with various courses of action in Rafah, and Israeli participants agreed to take these concerns into account."

Behind the scenes, however, there are indications that the "limited" Israeli strike on Iran is in fact the prelude to a full-scale assault on Rafah.

Both the *Times of Israel* and *Haaretz*, citing The New Arab have reported that the US has authorized Israel to assault Rafah as part of an agreement on Israel's strike on Iran.

The report in The New Arab claimed that Israel plans on "dividing Rafah into four quarters, which will be conquered sequentially."

Such an invasion would have disastrous consequences. In a statement Thursday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, "In Gaza, six and a half months of Israeli military operations have created a humanitarian hellscape. Tens of thousands of people have been killed. Two

million Palestinians have endured death, destruction, and the denial of lifesaving humanitarian aid; they are now staring down on starvation. An Israeli operation in Rafah would compound this humanitarian catastrophe.”

Haaretz, citing the Arabic newspaper Rai Alyoum, asserted “this week that Egypt has deployed forces along the Egyptian side of the Philadelphi route and defined a ‘neutral zone’ where displaced Gazans can go. According to the report, the zone is being readied to absorb 200,000 people and will have services, clinics, and food distribution points.”

If these reports are indeed correct, the United States not only gave Israel private authorization to carry out a strike on Iran, significantly escalating war throughout the region, but also authorizing it to carry out an assault on Rafah that would displace hundreds of thousands of people—potentially even onto the territory of Egypt.

Whatever was said in private, the US said essentially the same thing in public, declaring that whether to strike Iran was entirely up to Israel and publicly declaring that the military defeat of Hamas in Rafah is a goal of the United States.

This reality makes clear the close connection between the Gaza genocide and the US military buildup against Iran.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote on October 16, less than 10 days after the October 7 attack that was used as the pretext for the Gaza genocide, “The US is using the present crisis to put into effect long-standing plans for a war with Iran, as the Middle Eastern front of the US war with Russia and war plans against China.”

The WSWS continued, “The free rein given to Israel to commit mass murder against the population of Gaza, and the intensifying US war plans against Iran, must be seen in the context of the eruption of what is, in effect, the initial stages of a third world war.”

With Israel having launched an airstrike on Iranian territory and having presided over a genocide that has already killed 40,000 people in Gaza, these warnings are being rapidly confirmed.



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