

# Israeli strikes in Syria escalate tensions between Ankara and Tel Aviv

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On Wednesday 2 April, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) carried out coordinated air strikes against military installations in the Syrian capital Damascus, Hama and Homs. The strikes included the strategic T4 airbase in Homs.

Speaking to the *Jerusalem Post*, an Israeli official said the operations against the T4 base were a direct message to Turkey. “Do not establish a military base in Syria and do not interfere with Israeli operations in the region,” the official said. Israeli Army Radio reported, “The primary goal of the attack on Syria was to send a warning to the Turkish president [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan].”

In an interview with the Reuters on the sidelines of a NATO foreign ministers’ meeting in Brussels on Friday, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said, “We don’t want to see any confrontation with Israel in Syria because Syria belongs to Syrians.”

These attacks indicate that the risk of direct armed confrontation between Turkey and Israel, two regional powers and US allies, now vying for geopolitical influence in Syria, has reached a new stage. Earlier, Tel Aviv warned of war against Ankara’s growing influence in Syria through the al-Qaeda-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) regime, while President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Israel could target Turkey after Palestine and Lebanon.

Tensions between the two countries are escalating as a by-product of US imperialism’s efforts to reshape the Middle East under its domination. Israel’s ongoing genocide in Gaza, regime change in Syria and US attacks on Yemen are all part of the aggression against Iran and its allies.

Israeli air strikes targeted a military facility and air bases belonging to the Syrian army. The Hama military airbase in the west of the country was hit repeatedly,

almost completely destroying runways, hangars, weapons depots and a tower. The Israeli side said the bombings were aimed at destroying “the last remaining military capabilities in Syria” and “suspected military infrastructure”.

Parallel to the air strikes, Israel launched a ground operation in the Daraa (Hawar) region of southern Syria. Israeli troops crossed the UN-supervised buffer line between the two countries, in place since 1974, and carried out a ground operation near Tasil. This was Israel’s deepest ground offensive inside Syria since the regime change in December.

According to local sources, when Israeli troops attempted to destroy a former Syrian army base in the area, they clashed with armed local militias; Israeli forces killed them and confiscated their weapons caches. Syrian state agency SANA reported that at least 9 people were killed and many civilians wounded by Israeli shelling.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said that these operations, which took place overnight between Wednesday and Thursday, were “a clear message and warning for the future.” Katz added that Israel will not tolerate any entity that jeopardizes Israeli security interests and that the Syrian government will pay a “heavy price” if it allows “hostile forces to enter Syria.”

Another Israeli security official, speaking to the *Jerusalem Post*, expressed concern about Syria’s plans to provide Turkey with a military base. “If Turkey establishes an air base here, it could seriously harm Israel’s freedom of action in Syria,” the official said. “We will never allow our freedom of action to be restricted,” they added, describing Turkey’s military presence in Syria as a “potential threat” and stressing that the targeting of the T4 base was a clear expression

of this unease.

Recently, *Middle East Eye* (MEE), citing unnamed sources, reported that Turkey has begun the process of taking control of the T4 base and that plans are being prepared for its reconstruction.

According to MEE, Ankara's plans include the deployment of Hisar-type air defence systems at the base. According to the *Roketsan* website, Hisar missiles are used to protect military bases and ports from air attacks. It is also alleged that Turkey plans to deploy advanced attack-capable UCAVs, various surveillance vehicles and Russian-made S-400 air defence systems at the T4 base. This would pose a threat to Israel's F-35s and air operations in the region.

In 2019, the Trump administration responded to Ankara's acquisition of S-400 systems from Russia by excluding Turkey from the production of F-35 fighter jets. This was followed in December 2020 by Congress' approval of a resolution to impose CAATSA sanctions on Turkey. Recently, there has been speculation that Turkey might deploy the S-400s to another country in coordination with the United States.

A Western intelligence source confirmed the allegations to the *Jerusalem Post*, saying that Ankara is undertaking to play the role of Syria's air defence and is preparing to send troops to the T4 base.

The T4 (Tiyas) airbase is located in central Syria, close to the historic city of Palmyra and not far from the Israeli-occupied territories. Its strategic location is crucial both for Syria's internal security and for air dominance in the region.

According to Syrian Defense Ministry officials, Ankara and Damascus are negotiating a comprehensive defense pact under which Turkey will provide air support and military protection to Syria, which currently lacks a regular army. A Syrian Defense Ministry official said that the first delivery of UAVs/UCAVs will take place soon:

Turkish air defence technology is of great importance in terms of eliminating the PKK/YPG threat and possible terrorist infiltrations later, as well as Israeli invasions and violations. In addition, Turkish UAVs/UCAVs, whose capabilities and field superiority are globally recognised, will ensure

our border security against drug trafficking on the Jordanian border, which became the national income policy of the former regime, and against the Hezbollah threat from Lebanon.

The Syrian government described the latest Israeli attacks as a "deliberate attempt to destabilise the region" and said they were mounted to hinder growing defence cooperation with Turkey.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a harsh statement on Thursday, saying, "The provocative statements made by Israeli Ministers against Turkey reflect their current state of mind as well as the aggressive and expansionist policies of the fundamentalist and racist Israeli government."

With the regime change in Syria, Washington is planning to create an anti-Iran axis between Ankara, Damascus and Tel Aviv, but these plans are being hindered by the growing rivalry between the Turkish and Israeli bourgeoisies.

In this rivalry, which is exacerbated by US imperialism's quest for total domination of the Middle East as part of its drive for global hegemony, targeting both China and its NATO allies, the regimes in Ankara and Tel Aviv both act in the service of imperialism in a destructive collaboration against Palestine, Iran and all the peoples of the Middle East.

The only way forward for workers and oppressed peoples throughout the Middle East is to unite and mobilize under an international socialist strategy and leadership against the imperialist powers and all their bourgeois proxies. The ally of the workers of the Middle East in this struggle for a Middle East Socialist Federation is the American, European and international working class.



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