

European Union presents conditions for participation in the war against Iran

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17 March 2026

The European Union (EU) has firmly rejected US President Donald Trump's call to participate in a military operation in the Strait of Hormuz. "No one wants to be actively drawn into this war," said EU Foreign Affairs Commissioner Kaja Kallas following a meeting of EU foreign ministers held in Brussels on Monday. "This is not our war."

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and other European heads of government also spoke out against participating in the war. "The question is not whether we will participate," said Merz. "We will not do so." Regarding NATO, he said it is "a defensive alliance, not an interventionist alliance," and therefore its involvement here is not called for.

US President Donald Trump had previously urged European allies to help secure the sea route, which has been blocked by Iran since the US-Israeli attack, and threatened consequences for NATO in the event of a refusal.

"It's only appropriate that people who are the beneficiaries of the Strait will help to make sure that nothing bad happens there," Trump told the Financial Times. "If there's no response or if it's a negative response I think it will be very bad for the future of NATO." He repeated this threat at a Monday press conference.

Europe's "no" does not mean a rejection of the criminal war against Iran, nor does it exclude the possibility that the Europeans will intervene in the conflict with their own troops. They are simply unwilling to get involved in a war over whose course and outcome they have no influence. They want to drive a hard bargain for their participation in the war.

Merz had assured Trump of his support just two weeks ago, immediately after the war began. "We agree that this terrible regime in Tehran must go, and we will discuss what will happen the day after they are gone," he said during a visit to the White House.

But since then, it has become clear that Trump did not commit to a limited war that would bring down the Iranian regime like a house of cards. Iran proved to be far more resilient than the war hawks in Washington and Tel Aviv had imagined. It has carried out retaliatory strikes in eight countries and blocked the Strait of Hormuz, through which one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas supplies, as well as 13 percent of all fertiliser exports, flow.

If the blockade persists for weeks or months, the consequences for the global economy would be devastating. Fuel and heating prices, which have already risen sharply, would skyrocket further, as would food prices. The chemical industry, which relies on petroleum as a raw material, would also be severely affected. The disruption of global supply chains would reverberate through nearly every sector of the economy.

The Trump administration is responding by preparing a ground offensive that threatens to set the entire Middle East ablaze. Trump, who has neither informed nor consulted NATO allies about his war plans, is now demanding their support in the form of an ultimatum.

The European powers are outraged—but not averse. They themselves have been working toward regime change in Iran for years and have supported economic sanctions against the country. They have backed the Israeli genocide in Gaza, which also served as preparation for the war against Iran. They want to secure their share in the redivision of the Middle East and are directly affected by the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. Yet they are setting conditions. They want to ensure that their own interests are safeguarded.

Foremost among these is the continuation of the war against Russia in Ukraine. Iran is indeed one of Russia's closest allies, and a defeat there would weaken Russia. Yet in the short term, the war is working in Moscow's favour. Ukraine lacks weapons that are now being deployed in the Gulf, and rising energy prices are replenishing the Russian treasury, which the imposition of international sanctions were intended to drain.

The fact that Trump has eased sanctions on Russian oil to mitigate the consequences of the Hormuz blockade has been met with outrage in Europe. According to the former German ambassador to Moscow, Rüdiger von Fritsch, Russia has earned an additional 6 billion euros since the start of the war in Iran.

Wolfgang Ischinger, president of the Munich Security Conference, therefore recommended that the European powers link their participation in the Iran war to counter-demands: "That the US re-engage directly in Ukraine, that the long-planned American sanctions package against Russia is finally implemented."

Ischinger demanded that the approach to the Ukraine issue,

the Gaza situation, and the Iran issue be coordinated among the allies, “as was customary in the past.” An angry Trump could cause even more difficulties in the war in Ukraine than is already the case, he added.

The Europeans are not willing to submit to the command of the US, which they increasingly perceive as an adversary and rival. They do not want to be dragged into a long-running, disastrous, US-led war, as in Afghanistan. They fear that a US-provoked collapse of state power in Iran and an ethnic fragmentation of the country would trigger a civil war and a massive wave of refugees toward Europe. Reports that the US was arming Kurdish groups against the regime in Tehran therefore met with protest in Europe.

Emmanuel Macron, the president of France—a former colonial power—is the most vocal advocate for a European military intervention in the region that is independent of the United States.

On March 11, at the initiative of France, which currently holds the G7 presidency, the G7 nations agreed to guarantee freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. This is said to be a “purely defensive” mission to escort tankers and container ships, which will not begin immediately but “as soon as possible after the end of the most intense phase of the conflict.” The model for this is the EU’s Operation Aspides, which protects merchant ships between the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea from attacks by Yemeni Houthi militias.

However, the mission’s purportedly “defensive” nature is contradicted by the fact that Macron has dispatched a naval fleet to the eastern Mediterranean that is unprecedented by French standards, which, according to his statement, may be deployed in the Strait of Hormuz.

It comprises eight frigates, two helicopter carriers, and the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, which is equipped with various weapon systems, 30 Rafale fighter jets, and several helicopters and reconnaissance aircraft. A French submarine, as well as frigates from the Netherlands, Italy, Spain and Greece, are also accompanying the armada.

The United Kingdom, which is a member of NATO but not the EU, is also participating in the military deployment in the Middle East. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said at a press conference: “Ultimately, we have to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to ensure stability in the market. That is not a simple task. So we’re working with all of our allies, including our European partners, to put together a viable, collective plan that can restore freedom of navigation in the region as quickly as possible and ease the economic impact.”

Starmer insisted, however, that he would not allow the UK to be drawn into “the wider war.” He sent the air defence-specialised destroyer HMS Dragon to the eastern Mediterranean and placed the aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales on heightened alert.

Germany is represented in the eastern Mediterranean only by the frigate Nordrhein-Westfalen and has stationed 280 soldiers

to combat ISIS in northern Iraq, Baghdad and Jordan. In consultation with the EU and NATO, it is concentrating its forces on NATO’s eastern flank and the North Atlantic for a confrontation with Russia.

Unlike Britain and France, which only allowed the US to use their bases for the war on Iran after initial hesitation, Germany posed no problems whatsoever. Above all, the Ramstein Air Base, where some 9,000 US soldiers are stationed, is indispensable as a hub and logistical base for US wars in the Middle East.

Despite Kallas’s claim that “This is not our war,” the European powers are deeply entangled in the war against Iran—a war that violates international law, has already claimed thousands of lives, and threatens to set the entire region ablaze. They do not want to stand on the sidelines in the struggle for the redivision of the world among the great powers.

The war is being waged on the backs of the working class and the youth, who must bear the costs in the form of price hikes, massive military spending and the reintroduction of conscription. War and militarism are incompatible with democracy. As in the US, where Trump’s war policy goes hand in hand with a frontal assault on workers’ democratic rights, the ruling class in Europe is also increasingly relying on repression.

There is no serious opposition to this among the established parties. From Germany’s Left Party to the far-right Alternative for Germany, all have welcomed the treacherous assassination of the Iranian leadership. The war can only be stopped through the mobilisation of the international working class on the basis of a socialist program that links the struggle against social inequality, war and dictatorship with the struggle against their root cause, capitalism.



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