

# European powers prepare participation in war against Iran

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The promise made by EU foreign ministers on Monday not to take part in the war against Iran (“This is not our war”) lasted just three days. On Thursday, the heads of state and government of France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK and Japan issued a joint statement in which they pledged to keep the Strait of Hormuz open.

The statement makes no mention whatsoever of the US and Israel, which attacked Iran 20 days ago in violation of international law and have been bombing it non-stop ever since. Instead, it blames the victim for the war and accuses Iran of breaking international law.

“We condemn in the strongest terms recent attacks by Iran on unarmed commercial vessels in the Gulf, attacks on civilian infrastructure including oil and gas installations, and the de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iranian forces,” the joint statement says. “Freedom of navigation is a fundamental principle of international law. ... We express our readiness to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait. We welcome the commitment of nations who are engaging in preparatory planning.”

This can only be understood as an announcement of their own participation in the war, something the foreign ministers had rejected just three days earlier. Although the joint statement does not specify any concrete steps, and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on the sidelines of the European Union (EU) summit that they would only participate once the fighting had ceased, the rapid escalation of the war tells a different story.

After Israel attacked the world’s largest gas field, “South Pars,” on Wednesday—from which Iran derives 70 percent of its natural gas supply—Iran declared oil and gas facilities in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to be legitimate targets.

Iranian missiles caused severe damage to the world’s largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant, Ras Laffan in Qatar. Seventeen percent of the facility’s capacity was destroyed, and repairs could take several years. Two oil refineries in Kuwait and one in Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, were also hit. Yanbu is located on the Red Sea and is the only Saudi port that does not rely on the Strait of Hormuz for oil exports. As a result of the escalation, the price of gas on the world market rose by 35 percent and the price of oil by 7 percent to 115 dollars per barrel.

The European powers made it clear from the outset that they do not fundamentally oppose involvement in the war and support regime change in Tehran. However, they are not prepared to subordinate themselves to the US and take part in a war over whose course they have no influence and which could end in an economic and political catastrophe for Europe.

Chancellor Merz made this clear once again in a government statement he delivered in Germany’s Federal Parliament (Bundestag) on Wednesday before leaving for the EU summit. He began by emphasising Germany’s and Europe’s claims to great power status in contrast to the US.

“In this European Union of 450 million inhabitants—100 million more than in the United States of America—we no longer wish to sell ourselves short,” he said. “We identify our interests and, at the same time, identify the means of power to enforce these interests. We are learning: the others are also dependent on us, not just we on them. And we are learning that we can, indeed must, make use of this.”

It is precisely these “interests”—the interests of German imperialism—that Merz now once again seeks to enforce with “means of power”—that is, with military force—which are dragging Germany and Europe ever

deeper into the maelstrom of a war that can only end in social and political catastrophe.

The brutal war of aggression against Iran did not spring from the twisted mind of Trump and his fascist Secretary of War, Hegseth. It is the culmination so far of 35 years of US efforts to compensate for its economic decline through the use of military force, which has devastated large parts of the Middle East and is supported by both Republicans and Democrats.

During the brutal, torturous reign of the Shah—whom Washington helped bring to power in a coup in 1953—Iran was the US’s most important stronghold in the Middle East. It was only after the 1979 revolution that it was replaced by Israel. US imperialism has never forgiven the Iranian people for that revolution.

Under Trump, US imperialism is now endeavouring to undo all the gains of the last 120 years—the social gains of the working class as well as the results of national liberation struggles. The multi-billion-dollar oligarchy, whose interests Trump represents, is attempting to throw the world back into the state of colonialism and boundless exploitation of the 19th century. Trump lays claim to the whole of Latin America, Cuba and the Middle East and is preparing for war against China.

German imperialism, which has already plunged the world into catastrophe twice, cannot stand idly by. Just as the First World War, which began with a conflict over Serbia and quickly escalated into a brutal struggle for the redivision of the world, involving 40 states and some 70 million soldiers, the war against Iran also threatens to become a global conflagration.

In his speech to the Bundestag, Merz openly expressed solidarity with the warmongers. The German government shares “with Israel and the United States the goal that Iran should no longer pose a threat in the future,” he declared. He rejected participation in the war on the grounds that there is “as yet no convincing plan as to how this operation could succeed.” However, this does not rule out participation should the war escalate further.

International law, the violation of which by Russia served for four years as the justification for Germany financing the war in Ukraine with almost €100 billion, is now being trampled underfoot. Yet there is no doubt among serious legal experts that the war against Iran is contrary to international law—in other words, a war

crime.

95 German law professors teaching at various universities have signed a statement accusing the German government of failing to “issue a clear condemnation of the actions contrary to international law” and thus of “contributing to the further erosion of the rules-based and institutional order in Europe and the world.” The legal experts explain in detail why the use of military force against Iran by Israel and the US constitutes “a violation of the prohibition on the use of force under international law.”

Foreign policy cannot be separated from domestic policy. With the same ruthlessness with which those in power flout international law when it stands in the way of their imperialist interests, they will disregard democratic rights when resistance to their policies of war and social spending cuts begins to stir.



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