

Iran reports reopening Strait of Hormuz as Paris summit plans European intervention

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Iran announced a shaky reopening of the Strait of Hormuz to commercial shipping yesterday, as 49 countries met in an emergency summit in Paris to plan a naval intervention into the waterway. US President Donald Trump responded, however, by refusing to lift the US naval blockade of Iranian ports. The flurry of announcements, while they produced a fall in oil prices, has neither produced a lasting peace nor resolved any of the fundamental conflicts underlying the war.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that “passage for all commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz is declared completely open for the remaining period of ceasefire.” Thus the reopening depends on Washington continuing to respect the ceasefire it declared last week, as well as Israel respecting a truce with Lebanon. Under Araghchi’s terms, Iranian military forces will still control which vessels can transit the straight, the shipping lanes they can use, and the tolls they will pay to Iran.

Trump immediately announced that the US naval blockade of Iran would “remain in full force” until Iran made a comprehensive deal with Washington. Vessels heading to or from Iranian ports remain subject to interception by the US Navy, and Iran’s oil exports remain blocked. Trump claimed that a peace deal is “very close,” but only days ago, negotiations in Islamabad collapsed after 20 hours of talks.

Even if the US ceasefire somehow holds however, Trump’s war of aggression against Iran, his calls to plunder Iranian oil and his genocidal threats to annihilate Iranian civilization will have lasting and irreversible economic and political consequences. The massive human and economic toll of the war is only beginning to come into view. Even if fighting does not resume, which is far from guaranteed, this toll will continue to grow in the coming months.

New wars of extermination have claimed thousands of

lives alongside the tens of thousands lost in Israel’s genocide in Gaza. Israel’s invasion of Lebanon has killed at least 2,196 people and displaced over one million.

Iran reported that it had suffered 1,500 deaths and 18,551 wounded from the war by March 25. However, it is widely expected that it has downplayed casualties, especially those in its military forces, which number several thousand dead at the very least. Over 81,000 civilian buildings have been hit including 61,000 homes, 19,000 commercial properties, 275 medical centers, and 500 schools. At least 3.2 million Iranians are internally displaced within Iran, according to UN figures, mainly fleeing US bombings of major cities.

In a late March statement based on testimony from its employees in Iran, the Norwegian Refugee Council said: “Countless homes, hospitals and schools have been damaged or destroyed. ... (I)n nearly every neighbourhood of Tehran buildings are destroyed with surrounding damages. Desperate families tape their windows to prevent shattered glass that has already caused too many civilians casualties. With no Internet and heavily disrupted banking services, daily life is increasingly difficult.”

Moreover, International Energy Agency (IEA) Director Fatih Birol warned this week that the world economy now faces “the greatest energy security threat in history,” comparable to the combined impact of the 1970s oil shock and the 2022 cutoff of Russian gas supplies. Birol warned, “we lost 13 million barrels (of oil) per day. Tomorrow may be bigger. In terms of gas, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, we lost about 75 [billion cubic meters], and today we are much higher than that ... The longer the disruption lasts, the more severe the problem becomes.”

Shortages are set to mount rapidly in the coming months. Over the last month, refineries were still receiving Persian Gulf energy shipments that had left before the war started, Birol added, but “during the month

of April, nothing has been loaded.” Moreover, over a third of the Persian Gulf’s 80 most critical energy facilities monitored by the IEA have been “severely damaged.” Returning them to normal output could take 2 to 5 years, assuming there are no further wars.

Above all, however, energy, shipping and insurance companies have no clear idea whether or how long the current ceasefire, which Trump has set to expire on April 22, will last. Ships are therefore not passing through the Strait of Hormuz. This means that the coming energy shortages, resulting surges in prices, and hardships for the working class will be even greater than if it had been possible to restart operations today.

The major capitalist powers’ inability to coordinate any progressive, rational policy in response to the coming global shock was on display yesterday in the Paris summit. Leaders of France, Britain, Italy and Germany met in Paris; those of 45 other countries including European countries, Persian Gulf sheikdoms, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Canada and Ukraine attended by videoconference. It focused on planning their own military and naval intervention into the Persian Gulf.

The Paris summit communiqué featured no criticism of the criminal actions of the US government, its launching of an illegal war of aggression, its calls for a genocide of Iranian civilization, or war crimes like mass targeting of civilian infrastructure. It was silent on the fact that the US blockade of Hormuz is an act of war against not only Iran, but their countries’ own vital energy supplies. It aimed instead to position these governments in the coming conflicts over what energy resources will remain available.

The summit called for “the unconditional, unrestricted, and immediate re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz.” It pledged to work with “shipping operators, insurers, and industry bodies” so they “can resume operations as soon as conditions permit.” It proposed that Britain and France would lead a “strictly defensive multinational mission to protect merchant vessels, reassure commercial shipping operators, and conduct mine clearance operations as soon as conditions permit following a sustainable ceasefire agreement.”

The claim that a deployment led by two leading former colonial powers in the Middle East would be “strictly defensive,” after they acquiesced to the US war of aggression against Iran, is ludicrous. Britain and France are imperialist powers. While it is unclear whether conditions—that is to say, Iranian missile and drone forces—will allow them to deploy their warships to the

Gulf, it is evident that they are intervening to defend their military bases and oil profits in the region.

Significantly, European officials at the Paris summit called for both military coordination with the Trump administration and German military participation in the operation. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz proposed “a deployment of the German army in the context of an international mission ... So we will participate in discussions on military planning that will soon take place. And we would also like to consider participation by the United States of America.”

While Merz’s call to coordinate with US forces underscores European governments’ complicity in US government criminality, his call for military coordination with US imperialism cannot paper over the explosive conflicts between the NATO imperialist powers. The fact that these leaders met without any formal US participation, effectively disinviting the United States while the US Navy blockaded their energy supplies, points to the deep-going collapse of US-European relations.

Tensions are also mounting with China, which was invited to attend the Paris summit but ultimately declined to do so as US officials threatened its energy trade with Iran.

Deepening global wars and economic crises will not only expose the criminality of imperialism, but also provoke growing opposition among workers internationally. It is this progressive social force that must come forward against a mortal crisis of the capitalist system. The decisive question is the independent, international mobilization of the working class against imperialist war and to take power out of the hands of the capitalist oligarchies that are profiting from the mass slaughter and impoverishment of working people.



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