

Middle Eastern politics & society

Hizbollah says Iran response to attack on Damascus consulate 'inevitable'

Militant group's leader Hassan Nasrallah says air strike they blame on Israel will prove 'turning point'



Iranians mourn next to a truck carrying the coffins of members of the Revolutionary Guard killed in an air strike on the Iranian consulate building in Damascus © Rouzbeh Fouladi/ZUMA Press Wire

Raya Jalabi in Beirut, **James Shotter** in Jerusalem and **Bitva Ghaffari** in Tehran
 YESTERDAY

The leader of Lebanon’s Hizbollah militant group said that the strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus this week widely blamed on Israel marked a “turning point” and vowed that Iran’s response would be “inevitable”.

Seven members of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, including two senior commanders, [were killed](#) on Monday in an attack that Tehran and Hizbollah, Iran’s most powerful proxy, have blamed on Israel.

Iran has [vowed to respond](#) to the attack, which killed 13 people, including a senior general.

The strike on an Iranian diplomatic mission and the killing of Brigadier General Mohammad-Reza Zahedi, a prominent commander of the Revolutionary Guards, marked a significant escalation in hostilities that have engulfed the region since Hamas’s attack on Israel on October 7.

“Rest assured that the Iranian response to the attack on the Iranian consulate will inevitably come,” Hassan Nasrallah told his followers in a public address commemorating Quds Day, an annual event marking support for Palestinians and opposition to Israel’s occupation.

He deferred to Iran's supreme leader on when and what form that retaliation would take. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has vowed to respond, saying "Israel would regret its crimes".

Before the strike, Iran appeared to be seeking to de-escalate tensions to avoid being drawn into direct conflict with Israel or the US.

Israel has not commented on Monday's attack. It usually neither confirms nor denies involvement in such incidents.

But Israeli authorities have taken precautions in case of an Iranian attack.

This week, Israel called up reservists to bolster air defence units, and GPS signals have been blocked in Tel Aviv, in order to disrupt missiles and drones. The Israel Defense Forces also announced it was halting all leave for soldiers serving with combat units.

Speaking to Israeli forces at an air base on Friday, defence minister Yoav Gallant said Israel was continuing to attack enemies wherever it wanted to.

"It could be in Damascus and it could be in Beirut," he said, according to Reuters. "The enemy is badly hit in all places and is therefore looking for ways to respond. We are ready with a multi-layered defence."

Iran's network of proxies in the region — dubbed "the axis of resistance" — have since October engaged in exchanges of fire with Israel and attacked US forces and bases across the Middle East, leading to heightened fears of a broader regional conflagration.

In January, three months after [the Israel-Hamas war](#) erupted, Tehran responded to a suspected Israeli attack that killed another of its commanders in Syria by launching a barrage of missiles against what it called an Israeli "espionage centre" in northern Iraq. The attack killed several civilians, but there were no reports or claims of Israeli casualties.

Iran has repeatedly said it does not want an all-out war with Israel or the US, preferring to lean on its proxies to carry out tit-for-tat attacks over the past six months.

Hizbollah has engaged in near-daily exchanges with Israel while Iraqi militias have launched attacks on US forces in the region. The targeting of shipping in the Red Sea by Houthi rebels in Yemen has badly disrupted one of the world's important maritime

trade routes.

Nasrallah said people in the region should prepare for a potential Israeli reaction to Iran's revenge. He also criticised Arab leaders in the region who have normalised ties with Israel.

In Iran, Revolutionary Guards commander Major General Hossein Salami launched a tirade against Israel as well as the US for supporting the Jewish state, at a rally marking Quds Day in Tehran.

“We are warning that no enemy action committed towards our sacred establishment shall go unpunished. As stated by the supreme commander-in-chief [Khamenei], our brave men will punish the Zionist regime.”

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