

**Middle East conflict**

## Iran lashes out at Europeans over call for restraint in attacking Israel

US has warned Tehran or its proxies could launch a retaliatory strike this week



Washington and its allies have made a joint diplomatic push to reduce tensions in the Middle East © Jalaa Marey/AFP/Getty Images

**Najmeh Bozorgmehr** in Tehran, **Felicia Schwartz** and **Steff Chávez** in Washington and **James Shotter** in Jerusalem 3 HOURS AGO

Iran's foreign ministry on Tuesday condemned European leaders for urging Tehran not to attack Israel, asserting that the Islamic republic remained "resolute" in defending its security and would "not seek anyone's permission to exercise its legitimate rights" to respond to being attacked.

This followed a joint statement by the UK, France, and Germany on Monday calling on Iran and its proxy forces to refrain from attacking Israel. Tensions have escalated after Iran accused Israel of assassinating [Ismail Haniyeh](#), political leader of Hamas, in Tehran two weeks ago.

Nasser Kanaani, Iran's foreign ministry's spokesperson, criticised the European statement as an "excessive demand", particularly since it failed to address "crimes" committed by Israel's during its [war in Gaza](#). He accused the Europeans of "brazenly" asking Iran to refrain from "punitive and deterrent actions against the regime that has violated its sovereignty and territorial integrity" with the killing of Haniyeh.

It came a day after the US warned that Tehran or its proxies could launch an attack on Israel this week in retaliation for the assassinations of Haniyeh and the killing of Hizbollah leader Fuad Shukur in Beirut.

The White House said it was preparing for "what could be a significant set of attacks"

in its most specific public assessment of the timing of a potential assault from Tehran, echoing a similar assessment from Israeli officials.

“We share the same concerns and expectations that our Israeli counterparts have with respect to potential timing here, [It] could be this week,” said US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby.

He added: “It is difficult to ascertain at this particular time if there is an attack by Iran and or its proxies, what that could look like, but we have to be prepared.”

Kirby’s comments came as the chief spokesperson for Israel’s military, Daniel Hagari, said Israeli forces were on “peak alert” for retaliation by Iran or its allies, including Hizbollah, the Lebanese militant group, and had increased air patrols over Lebanon to detect threats.

However, Hagari said Israel was not currently changing its guidance for civilians.

The US is sending [additional military assets](#) to the region to help defend Israel, including a guided missile submarine, on top of additional warships and fighter aircraft it had already pledged.

Washington has also called on Turkey and its other allies to “prevail” on Iran to avoid a further escalation with Israel, Washington’s envoy to Ankara said.

“We ask all of our allies that have any relations with Iran to prevail on them to de-escalate and that includes Turkey”, US ambassador Jeff Flake said at a press briefing in Istanbul.

Flake added that his Turkish contacts appeared to be “more confident than we are that [the stand-off between Israel and Iran] won’t escalate”.

US President Joe Biden and the leaders of the UK, France, Germany and Italy on Monday warned of the consequences of any Iranian retaliation and urged Israel and Hamas to resume ceasefire talks to end the 10-month war in Gaza.

“We expressed our support for the defence of Israel against Iranian aggression and against attacks by Iran-backed terrorist groups,” the leaders said in a joint statement. “We called on Iran to stand down its ongoing threats of a military attack against Israel and discussed the serious consequences for regional security should such an attack take place.”

As part of the international efforts to defuse heightened tensions, UK Prime Minister

Keir Starmer also had a rare phone call with the new Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. He warned of “a serious risk of miscalculation” of any attack on Israel, adding that “now was the time for calm and careful consideration”.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, also held calls with Pezeshkian.

*Additional reporting by Adam Samson in Istanbul*

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