



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

# Iran wants revenge but has no capacity or interest in a direct conflict with Israel



The regime in Tehran received a big slap in the face after a missile **attack** on its consulate in Damascus killed important figures from the military leadership.

Even though there were expectations that Iran would retaliate strongly, it is unlikely that it will. The reasons for abstaining far outweigh Tehran's benefit from a counterstrike.

Israel has not confirmed that it was behind the attack, but for Tehran, there is no doubt that Israel is responsible, and all the anger has been directed towards it. Hitherto, only verbal.

The bombing of the consulate in Syria and the death of 13 important Iranian officers, including General Mohammad Reza Zahedi, the principal commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) for operations overseas, triggered mass outpourings of anger on the streets across Iran.

"We warn that no action by any enemy concerning our holy establishment will go unanswered", said the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard, General Hossein Salami, at one of the mass gatherings in Tehran.

## Iran's leaders do not want conflict

The entire state and military leadership, including Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Ebrahim Raisi, took part in street demonstrations and religious commemorative ceremonies following the deaths of high-ranking generals.

It was their duty to participate in the mass outpourings of popular anger, which they organised themselves, and, in this way, open the channel for the release of anger.

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Even though thousands of Iranians are **calling** for a full-scale war against Israel in the streets, they are fully aware that Iran lacks both the capability and the justification to start one.

The attack on the Iranian consulate in Syria, and particularly the killing of General Mohammad Reza Zahedi, had a significant military motive, given that it was about people who manage the combat activities of pro-Iranian forces in the region.

However, given that General Zahedi had a "prominent role" in the terrorist operations that Hamas carried out on Israel on October 7, as the organisation's military branch stated on his passing, Israel views this strike as partially retaliatory.

However, Tehran cannot afford large-scale retaliation, no matter how much state loyalists on the streets of Iranian cities demand it.

## The region has already been destabilised enough

Iran has long had a clearly defined strategy in the Middle East region, which excludes its direct involvement. This strategy serves Iran's interests to keep the region in a state of instability and hinder processes that have largely led to stabilisation and reconciliation, primarily between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

Through its **proxies throughout the region**, Iran has managed to engage a large part of Israel's resources, as well as the resources of Israel's allies. Tehran simply has no interest in changing the current level of conflict with a large-scale action against Israel.

Its satellite, the Houthi militia, has been effectively disrupting shipping through the Red Sea, attacking trade cargoes intended for Israel or its allies.

Lebanon's Hezbollah is a constant threat to Israel, given its military capabilities.

The prolonged Israeli military campaign against Hamas in Gaza, the suffering of Palestinian civilians, and the pressure from the United States on Benjamin Netanyahu's government to mediate a ceasefire and avert the humanitarian catastrophe have all contributed to Israel's diminished position.

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Although it might seem to the hawks in Tehran that Israel is in an unenviable position, as its military resources have been stretched on several fronts while political turbulence in the country affects government decisions, Iran still does not have adequate military capabilities to engage in direct conflict with Israel.

A possible broad action against Israel would threaten Iran's overall position in the Middle East, as it could easily be left without the support of China as a dominant partner.

Beijing has been under pressure from the US to influence Iran to pacify the destructive actions of its satellites in the region, primarily the Houthis in Yemen and their attacks on the trade corridor through the Red Sea.

An open attack by Iran on Israel would be a significant problem for China, which has been trying to stabilise its relations with the US, and Washington has expressly conditioned its constructive role in the Middle East in terms of reducing tensions produced by its ally Iran.

## Actions of limited volume

What then remains for the regime in Tehran to do to appease the public's demands for retaliation against Israel and its allies (primarily the US), without starting a direct conflict with Israel at the same time?

Iran might take some limited-scale action against Israeli (or American) targets in the region or anywhere in the world, which it would present to the domestic public as retaliation for the attack on the consulate in Damascus. It has frequently carried out such actions in the past, mostly through its branches in the area.



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The US government has **announced** that since October 7, there have been more than 150 attacks by pro-Iranian militias on US forces in Iraq and Syria.

"Iran is an expert in carrying out symbolic attacks", Ali Sadrzadeh, an author and analyst of Middle East affairs, **told the BBC**.

The US anticipated this development and informed Tehran that it was not involved in the attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus. The US administration has been putting pressure on Benjamin Netanyahu's government to approve the ceasefire measures in Gaza and end the humanitarian crisis.

Tehran's options are therefore limited, which was a good assessment by the planners of the attack on the Iranian military leaders in

Damascus.

However, Tehran is not ruling out using some of its proxies in the region to satisfy its angry and revenge-seeking population in the forthcoming weeks and months if a direct conflict with Israel is ruled out.