

Special Report 116, Israel Under Attack



Yihye Sinwar views **international pressure on Israel** not to enter Rafah and to tone down the level of its attacks on Gaza as means to bring what he would consider a favorable end to the war: Hamas would remain in control of Gaza and its badly mauled forces capable of speedy restoration. Such a success would buttress Hamas' political position among the Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and in the refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria while enhancing its reputation with Iran. For that reason, **Hamas rejected renewed proposals in exchange for the release of 40 abductees**, which were to include children, women, the wounded and the elderly. Instead, it offered 20 live abductees and 20 bodies, giving rise to concern that the majority of the 133 abductees still in Hamas's hands are dead. Hamas further demands Israel cease all military activities and withdraw from Gaza before any abductees are returned, the full restoration of Gaza and international guarantees that Israel will not renew its attack.

According to Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) Fatah, the largest Palestinian political party and a senior part of the Palestinian Authority, **charged Hamas with killing aid workers, stealing aid brought into Gaza and manufacturing a food crisis**. A Fatah TV anchor reported Hamas attacked aid workers, stole food and water and caused food prices to skyrocket in the Gaza: "Hamas' persecution of any body engaged in distributing [humanitarian] aid or securing it began from the start of the war. Hamas persecuted well-known figures and teams of volunteers on the ground as of mid-October (2023)," the anchor said. "It killed them for two reasons: first, to prevent any [other] party from acting in the Gaza Strip; second, to ensure **Hamas controls the aid, its distribution and and storage**, which of course leads to these crazy, unreal prices that no one can pay in the shadow of this destruction". After the occupation bombed storehouses controlled by Hamas, the accumulation of tons of various food and aid products that Hamas had taken exclusivity over became clear, while residents suffer hunger."

Israel's cleverly measured **response to Iran's massive attack** was meant to deliver a message: "you are vulnerable. We are able to hit you where it hurts; your air defenses are porous". Israel conducted pinpoint attacks on the air defenses of an important nuclear

facility in Natanz and a military airfield in Isfahan. Two **GPS guided Hypersonic missiles** developed by Israel were fired by Israeli aircraft from outside Iranian air space at S-300 anti-aircraft batteries, destroying them so effectively that one of the two was destroyed by Israel on its way to the already destroyed target.

Prior to the attack, Israel deployed small quadcopter **drones aimed at confusing Iranian air defenses**. Similar drones were previously used several times in recent years to attack Iranian military facilities. Iran claimed it did not know to whom they belonged, which relieved them of the need to respond.

Iranian officials had threatened to respond “immediately”, “within seconds of any Israel attack”. Once the Israeli attack was launched, they played it down by claiming it was unsuccessful, and that explosions heard in Natanz and Isfahan were the result of Iranian air defenses’ successful activity rather than any damage to Iranian defense facilities. Iranian national television programs aired so many repeated assurances that “all is normal” that people began to wonder just how normal things actually were. On the following day, **the camp of a major Iranian proxy militant group in Iraq was attacked**, leading to extensive damage and a number of casualties. However, satellite pictures confirm the destruction (see below)).



Ynet reports: A number of Iranian athletes expressed support for Israel, despite the risk involved. Mobina Rostami, who plays on the Iranian women's volleyball team, wrote on Instagram on the night Iran attacked Israel with hundreds of anti-aircraft missiles and drones: **"As an Iranian, I am truly ashamed of the authorities' attack on Israel**, but you need to know that the people in Iran love Israel and hate the Islamic Republic." She was arrested by the authorities and her social media was taken down. No one now knows where she is. Following the attack, a series of senior Iranian sportsmen came out. Ali Karimi, a former star of Iran's national soccer team uploaded a post on X social in which hands were seen joined with the Israeli flag and the flag of Iran from before the Islamic revolution in 1979, with the caption: **"We are Iran, not the Islamic Republic"**.

Another former player for the Iranian national soccer team, Milad Zeneyedpour, also spoke out against Iran's handling of the tensions in the region. "This war has nothing to do with me. It does not represent me. I am not the Islamic Republic. **This regime sees only its own survival.** The economic situation is difficult, and they are investing millions in missiles". Vahid Sarlak, coach of Iran's judo team, wrote on Instagram: "We Iranians are fighting in the Islamic Republic and not in Israel. We have no problem with the Jews and the Israelis. We see them as our friends. **The Iranian people should not pay the price of the regime's madness.**"

Israel Defense Forces Military Intelligence head Major General Aharon Haliva tendered his resignation to Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi for his part in the intelligence failure that enabled Hamas to perpetuate the October 7 atrocities. "I have carried the burden of that dark day with me every day and night since. I will forever carry the terrible pain of the war," he wrote. At the same time, Haliva called for the formation of a State Commission of Inquiry, which would have the authority to draw personal conclusions with regard to any personages it deemed responsible for the October 7 failures. "I am convinced ... it is appropriate to set up a state inquiry commission that can investigate all the factors and circumstances that led to the tragic events in a thorough, deep, comprehensive and critical manner," he wrote.

Hezbollah has increased the range of its attacks on civilian targets in the north of Israel. Yesterday the city of Tsfat was attacked, as were various villages in Upper Galilee. The slow, steady increase of range forces the Israeli military to respond with effective, targeted attacks on senior Hezbollah commanders. Yesterday, in separate attacks, a senior Radwan force commander and the head of Hezbollah's Western Air Defense were killed.

Israel Defense Forces **continue low-level fighting in central and southern Gaza** while the majority of troops are resting and re-equipping in preparation for the planned **re-entry into Gaza, specifically into Rafah**. Israel purchased tens of thousands of tents and, in cooperation with a number of Arab countries, is setting up a tent city north west of Rafah, including clinics, large kitchens, schools and playgrounds. **The civilian population in Rafah will be encouraged to move to the area before Israel attacks.** Hamas is expected to endeavor to block any such relocation because it wishes to continue to use civilians as human shields, and their expected deaths as fodder for propaganda. In the same way, the Hamas-controlled health authorities in Gaza refuse to distinguish between militant and civilian casualties while insisting that Israel somehow manages to target a disproportionate number of women and children in the course of its war against Hamas.

As of yesterday (April 22), Jewish people all over the world are commemorating the seven-day Passover festival, commemorating the exodus from Egypt, also known as the feast of freedom. Normally, we would prefer not to commemorate but celebrate. However, with **133 abductees still captive in Gaza and growing antisemitism in the US and Europe**, there is little inclination to celebrate. An empty chair, decorated with a yellow ribbon or with pictures of the abductees, is placed at every table, defensive measures are being taken by Jewish institutions, Jewish students and professors continue to be threatened and harassed, while authorities often take little or no action to bring those responsible to justice. Ominously, **many of us recall the early days of Hitler's rise to power** and the results to which those days ultimately led.