

**Research Briefing**

5 November 2024

By Library specialists

---

# Israel-Iran October 2024

## Summary

- 1 Israel and Iran in 2024
- 2 Iranian attack on Israel, 1 October 2024
- 3 Israeli attack on Iran, 26 October 2024
- 4 International reaction and statements

### **Disclaimer**

The Commons Library does not intend the information in our research publications and briefings to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. We have published it to support the work of MPs. You should not rely upon it as legal or professional advice, or as a substitute for it. We do not accept any liability whatsoever for any errors, omissions or misstatements contained herein. You should consult a suitably qualified professional if you require specific advice or information. Read our briefing [‘Legal help: where to go and how to pay’](#) for further information about sources of legal advice and help. This information is provided subject to the conditions of the Open Parliament Licence.

### **Sources and subscriptions for MPs and staff**

We try to use sources in our research that everyone can access, but sometimes only information that exists behind a paywall or via a subscription is available. We provide access to many online subscriptions to MPs and parliamentary staff, please contact [hoclibraryonline@parliament.uk](mailto:hoclibraryonline@parliament.uk) or visit [commonslibrary.parliament.uk/resources](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/resources) for more information.

### **Feedback**

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Please note that authors are not always able to engage in discussions with members of the public who express opinions about the content of our research, although we will carefully consider and correct any factual errors.

You can read our feedback and complaints policy and our editorial policy at [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk). If you have general questions about the work of the House of Commons email [hcenquiries@parliament.uk](mailto:hcenquiries@parliament.uk).

# Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1 Israel and Iran in 2024</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 The “shadow war” between Israel and Iran	7
1.2 Iranian missile attack and explosion in Iran in April 2024	8
1.3 Killing of Hamas, Hezbollah and IRGC leaders	9
<b>2 Iranian attack on Israel, 1 October 2024</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Iranian attack	10
2.2 Iranian and allied statements on the attack	11
2.3 UK and foreign participation in Israeli defence	13
2.4 Israeli statements on potential response	15
<b>3 Israeli attack on Iran, 26 October 2024</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1 Israeli air strikes	18
3.2 Iranian reaction and statements	19
<b>4 International reaction and statements</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1 Statement of G7 leaders	21
4.2 United States	21
4.3 United Kingdom	24
4.4 European Union	26
4.5 UN and UN Security Council	27
4.6 Response of Russia and China	28
4.7 Statements of Arab Gulf states	29

## Summary

On 1 October 2024, Iran launched between 180 and 200 missiles against Israel in what it said was retaliation for the killing of the Hamas political leader, the leader of Hezbollah, and a commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Hezbollah and Hamas, both proscribed by the UK as terrorist organisations, have long received significant support from Iran, including backing during their conflicts with Israel in 2023/24.

This is the second direct attack by Iran against Israel in 2024, following [an attack in April 2024](#) that Iran said was in response to an attack on its consulate in Syria. The [Commons Library briefing on the April 2024 attack](#) provides more on the response to this earlier attack, including activity at the United Nations, and pre-existing and new sanctions targeting Iran.

The UK, alongside the United States, European partners and the G7 group [condemned the Iranian attack in October 2024 as escalatory](#).

Israel said [it would respond](#), and on 26 October 2024 it [launched air strikes at Iran](#) which it said targeted missile and drone manufacturing sites and aerial defences. Iran's army said [four soldiers and a civilian were killed](#). US President Joe Biden said he [hoped Israel's strike](#) would be “the end” of the cycle of escalation. This briefing describes the Iranian and Israeli attacks and global response.

## Why did Iran launch the October 2024 attack?

In July 2024 the political leader of Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, was killed in Iran. Iran accused Israel of carrying out an assassination and [said it would respond](#). Israel has neither confirmed nor denied responsibility. In September 2024 an Israeli airstrike in Beirut killed the Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and a senior IRGC commander, Abbas Nilforoushan. Israel has [confirmed it was responsible for Nasrallah's death](#). Iran said [the deaths would “not go unanswered”](#).

Following the missile attack on 1 October, Iran's [IRGC issued a statement](#) saying it was a response to the killing of Ismail Haniyeh, Hassan Nasrallah and Abbas Nilforoushan. Iran's Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, said [Iran considered the issue “concluded”](#) following its attack and any retaliation would be met “more powerfully”. He said if other states assisted Israel or allowed use of their airspace, [Iran would consider them “legitimate targets”](#).

The US Department of Defense said that the October 2024 attack was [“nearly twice the scope”](#) of that in April and Iran “inten[d] to cause destruction”.

[Iran has long supported armed and terrorist groups across the Middle East](#) to oppose Israel and extend its own influence. This includes Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. During the 2023/24 conflict, Iran has supported their attacks on Israel. Israel has launched military operations in both Gaza and Lebanon with the stated aims to “[destroy Hamas’ governing and military capabilities and to bring the hostages home](#)” and to [halt Hezbollah’s attacks](#) against northern Israel. The Commons Library research collection, [Middle East instability in 2023/24](#), has more information on the region.

## What did Israel and the United States say on the 1 October 2024 attack?

The Israeli Government stated most of the missiles were intercepted. Some civilian and military sites were hit, but [without significant damage to Israeli forces](#) or their capabilities. [One Palestinian was killed](#) in the occupied West Bank in the Iranian strike, and [three in Jordan were reportedly injured](#).

Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the attack and said Israel has an “[obligation to respond](#)”. Speaking on 6 October 2024, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said “[at the moment, everything is on the table](#)”. He also said that Iran’s attack was “aggressive but imprecise” and [that “our attack will be deadly, precise and above all surprising”](#).

President Joe Biden said that the [Israeli response should be “proportional”](#) and he did not support [strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities](#) or [strikes on its oil production](#). The US Department of Defense says that the direction of American discussions with Israel about its response were “inform[ed]” by [American efforts on de-escalation](#) and the prevention of a wider regional conflict.

## Israel’s October 2024 attack on Iran

On 26 October 2024, [Israel launched air strikes](#) at locations near the Iranian capital, Tehran, and in the western province of Ilam and south-western Khuzestan. Iran’s army said [four soldiers were killed in the attacks](#).

The Israel Defence Forces said [it carried several waves of “precise and targeted” air strikes](#) against Iranian missile and drone manufacturing sites and aerial defences. One [component in the nuclear programme](#) was targeted.

In a statement following the attacks, Iran’s Foreign Ministry [condemned the airstrikes](#) as a “blatant violation of international law and the UN charter”. Iran urged the global community [to end Israeli operations in Gaza and Lebanon](#). On 2 November 2024 the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, further [threatened Israel and the United States](#) with a “crushing response to what they are doing to Iran and the Iranian nation and to the

resistance front [referring to the armed and terrorist groups Iran supports in the region, such as Hamas and Hezbollah]”.

## What has been the UK response?

The UK already has [RAF and other military assets in the Middle East region](#) as part of Operation Shader (against Islamic State/Daesh) in Syria and Iraq. Additional UK forces have been deployed since 7 October 2023 to deter conflict in the region from escalating.

Following the Iranian missile attack on 1 October, the UK Ministry of Defence said that two RAF Typhoon fighter jets and a Voyager air-to-air refuelling aircraft had “played an important part in wider deterrence and efforts to prevent further escalation” but [“they did not engage any \[Iranian\] targets”](#).

In a statement to the Commons on 7 October, the Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the [UK’s involvement so far related to “Israel’s self-defence”](#), and this was support that the UK “would always be prepared to provide”.

The then Leader of the Opposition, Rishi Sunak, said [“we stand unequivocally by Israel’s right to defend itself”](#) and the Iranian attack was a “stark reminder of the existential threat” that Israel faces. Liberal Democrat Foreign Affairs spokesperson Calum Miller tabled an early day motion stating that while Israel has the right to self-defence, “the best way” to keep its citizens safe and secure was [“not to retaliate and risk a regional war”](#).

Following the Israeli strikes, the Prime Minister [urged Iran not to respond](#). He said Israel had the right to self-defence and called for restraint. The Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, said [Iran’s “escalatory” attack reflected Iran’s “long history of malign \[...\] activity”](#). He said that [no UK troops were involved](#). The then Shadow Foreign Secretary, Andrew Mitchell, [supported Israel’s right to defend itself](#) and said “it has done so in a precise and targeted way”.

## What new sanctions have been applied?

In his talks with the G7, President Biden suggested introducing [further sanctions against Iran](#). The United States, European Union and United Kingdom apply a range of sanctions against Iran, including against the IRGC in its entirety, and against Iran’s missile and drone programmes. The US also has extensive sanctions against the Iranian economy, including its oil sector. Section 3 of the Library briefing, [Israel-Iran April 2024](#), provides a summary.

Following the Iranian attack in October 2024, [the US expanded its sanctions](#) against Iran’s petroleum and petrochemical sectors as a means to restrict Iranian government revenue. The [UK has announced sanctions](#) against members of the Iranian army, air force and IRGC intelligence, as well as two organisations. [The UK applies 423 sanctions against Iran](#).

# 1 Israel and Iran in 2024

## Background and further information on events in 2024

This Library briefing discusses the October 2024 missile attack by Iran against Israel and the Israeli response. For information on the April 2024 attacks, their background, and existing and newly-introduced sanctions applied against Iran, see the separate Commons Library briefing, [Israel-Iran April 2024](#).

Visit the Library's [collection of briefings on Middle East tensions in 2023/24](#) for more on the situation in the region, including in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Lebanon and Iranian support for armed and terrorist groups such as Hamas, the Houthis, Hezbollah and Shia militias in Syria and Iraq.

## 1.1 The “shadow war” between Israel and Iran

Iran and Israel have fought what has been described as a “shadow war” or “war between the wars” for decades through attacks on land, sea, air, and cyberspace. Analysts warn recent actions have brought this into the open.<sup>1</sup>

This “shadow war” has included Israeli attacks on Iran-linked sites in Syria, cyberattacks against Iran’s nuclear programme, and targeting of the [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) (IRGC) and other leaders. The IRGC is a 200,000-strong armed force of the Iranian state which also works overseas to support Iranian proxy groups and other allied groups and to coordinate military action.

Iran, through its allies and proxy groups, has [presence and influence in Lebanon, Gaza, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen](#), from which armed and terrorist groups have long conducted attacks on Israel and on US forces. Iran has also conducted attacks on foreign shipping.<sup>2</sup>

On 7 October 2023 the Palestinian group Hamas, officially designated a terrorist group by the United Kingdom, began [an armed assault](#) against Israel, [killing over 1,200 civilians and taking 254 hostages](#). From October, Iran-supported armed and terrorist groups have carried out attacks against

<sup>1</sup> [Israel is ratcheting up its shadow war with Iran](#), The Economist, 4 April 2024; [Iran and Israel have a long history of clandestine attacks](#), New York Times, 2 April 2024

<sup>2</sup> US Institute for Peace, [Israel: The Iran threat and options](#), 11 September 2023 and [Timeline: Israeli attacks on Iran](#), 30 January 2023

Israel and against American bases in the Middle East. This has included [Hezbollah attacks against northern and central Israel](#) in support of Hamas. Hezbollah is also a proscribed terrorist organisation.<sup>3</sup>

Israeli actions have been linked to the killing of several Hamas and Hezbollah leaders since October 2023. In October 2024 then Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said the loss of Hezbollah's leaders has undermined the group's military effectiveness.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2

### Iranian missile attack and explosion in Iran in April 2024<sup>5</sup>

Iran has had a long-standing presence in Syria to support President Bashar al-Assad during the Syrian civil war and to maintain a corridor to provide Hezbollah in Lebanon with weapons to threaten and attack Israel.<sup>6</sup> On 1 April 2024, Iran's consulate (diplomatic building) in Damascus was struck in a missile attack, killing seven IRGC members. Iran accused Israel of conducting the strike, which Israel neither confirmed nor denied. Iran said the strike would not go "unanswered".<sup>7</sup>

On 13 April 2024, the IRGC launched around 330 missiles and drones against Israel from Iran, flying over Syria, Jordan, and Iraq. These included around 120 ballistic missiles, 170 drones and 30 cruise missiles. The Israel Defence forces (IDF) said 99% were intercepted. One Israeli citizen was severely injured.

Following the Iranian attack, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said that "if Iran attacks Israel, Israel will attack Iran".<sup>8</sup> On 19 April 2024, two unnamed US officials were quoted in international media saying that Israel had launched a missile striking Iran's Isfahan region (where Iran has several military and nuclear facilities). An unnamed Israeli official said it was "intended to signal to Iran that Israel can attack its territory".<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> See Commons Library, [Middle East instability in 2023/24](#).

<sup>4</sup> Armed Conflict and Location Event Data, [At least 39 "axis of resistance" senior members and commanders killed since 7 October 2024](#), 1 August 2024; [Israel's Gallant says Hezbollah "battered and broken" since Nasrallah killing](#), Naharnet, 8 October 2024; [Which Hezbollah and Hamas leaders have been assassinated?](#), Reuters, 28 September 2024; [Israel has a long history of assassination operations across borders](#), Washington Post, 31 July 2024

<sup>5</sup> This section from Commons Library, [Israel-Iran April 2024](#), sections 1.1 to 1.5

<sup>6</sup> See Commons Library research briefing, [Syria's civil war in 2023](#), section 2.3.

<sup>7</sup> [Israel's heinous crime will not go answered: Raisi](#), Times of Tehran, 2 April 2024

<sup>8</sup> [Israel's foreign minister says reprisal against Iran is possible](#), Wall Street Journal, 14 April 2024

<sup>9</sup> [Israeli missile hits Iran, US officials confirm](#), CBS News, 19 April 2024; [Iran's foreign minister downplays drone attack](#), Reuters, 20 April 2024



Israel has neither confirmed nor denied an attack in Isfahan. Iran has acknowledged that an explosion took place but says this was linked to its air defences intercepting drones.<sup>10</sup>

Further information on these events, and international reaction can be found in Commons Library briefing [Israel-Iran April 2024: UK and international response](#).

## 1.3

### Killing of Hamas, Hezbollah and IRGC leaders

On 31 July 2024, the Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh was killed in Tehran when visiting Iran for the inauguration of the new Iranian President, Masoud Pezeshkian. Iran and Hamas blamed Israel and said they would retaliate. Israel neither confirmed nor denied involvement.<sup>11</sup>

At a meeting of the UN Security Council (UNSC) on 31 July 2024, the UN Secretary General and Security Council members, including the UK and US, called for restraint.<sup>12</sup> China and Russia condemned the killing of Ismail Haniyeh and said it would “sabotage” peace efforts. The Palestinian Authority and Iran (who are not UNSC members) criticised Israeli actions in the region, while Israel said that Iran was “the number one sponsor of terrorism” and that Israel would defend itself.<sup>13</sup>

On 27 September, the Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was killed in Beirut. IRGC commander Seyyed Abbas Niforoushan was killed in the same missile strike. The Israel Defence Forces confirmed it was responsible for Hassan Nasrallah’s death.<sup>14</sup> Iran said it would respond to the deaths.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> [Israeli missile hits Iran, US officials confirm](#), CBS News, 19 April 2024; [Iran’s foreign minister downplays drone attack](#), Reuters, 20 April 2024

<sup>11</sup> Atlantic Council, [Two top Hamas and Hezbollah leaders have been killed. What’s next?](#), 31 July 2024; [Iran will respond at “right time” to killing of Hamas leader](#), BBC News, 7 August 2024;

<sup>12</sup> UN, [Security Council debates ‘serious and dangerous escalation’ \[...\]](#), 31 July 2024; Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), [The UK is deeply concerned by the escalation \[...\]](#), 31 July 2024

<sup>13</sup> UN, [Briefing security council in wake of Hamas leader \[...\]](#), 31 July 2024

<sup>14</sup> [Hezbollah leader Nasrallah killed by Israel \[...\]](#), Politico, 28 September 2024; IDF, [The IDF eliminated the leader of Hezbollah terrorist organisation](#), 28 September 2024

<sup>15</sup> [Iran vows revenge for top IRGC officer killed in Beirut](#), Times of Israel, 29 September 2024

---

## 2 Iranian attack on Israel, 1 October 2024

### 2.1 Iranian attack

On 1 October 2024 Iran launched between 180 and 200 missiles targeting Israel. The October attack is the second direct attack by Iran against Israel and follows the [missile and drone attack by Iran in April 2024](#). (In 2018, an Iranian missile attack from Syria was launched against the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. The UK Government recognises the Heights as Syrian, not Israeli, territory).<sup>16</sup>

On 13 April 2024, Iran had fired 120 ballistic missiles at Israel, in addition to drones and cruise missiles. Israel said 99% were intercepted.<sup>17</sup> The United States Department of Defense says the October 2024 attack was “nearly twice the scope” of that in April and Iran had the “intent to cause destruction”.<sup>18</sup>

Iranian state media reported that [Fattah-2 hypersonic missiles](#) were among those used in October. This would be the first time such missiles have been used against Israel. These are faster and more manoeuvrable than other missiles and harder to intercept. Iran’s IRGC says these missiles are capable of “penetrating every missile defence system”. Iranian state media reported that 90% of the missiles met their intended target.<sup>19</sup>

The IDF said that most missiles were intercepted but a small number hit central and southern Israel, including two air bases, and some civilian sites. Media analysis of satellite imagery suggest greater damage was caused than in April 2024. The IDF says no major damage was caused and no aircraft or military equipment was damaged.<sup>20</sup>

Israel has a multi-layered air defence system. These are the:

- “Iron Dome”, to intercept short-range rockets and mortar fire

---

<sup>16</sup> Washington Institute for Near East Policy, [Iran’s miscalculated escalation in the Golan](#), 10 May 2018

<sup>17</sup> For background, see Commons Library, [Israel-Iran April 2024](#), 25 July 2024

<sup>18</sup> US Department of Defense, [US assets in Mediterranean again helped defend Israel](#), 1 October 2024

<sup>19</sup> [Which missiles Iran used in its retaliatory attack on Israel?](#), Mehr News Agency, 2 October 2024; [What we know about Iran’s missile attack on Israel](#), BBC News, 3 October 2024; [Iran’s military hails attack on Israel, warns against retaliation](#), BBC Monitoring, 2 October 2024

<sup>20</sup> [IDF acknowledges some Iranian missiles hit airbases](#), Times of Israel, 2 October 2024; [Israeli army names air bases hit in Iranian attack](#), BBC Monitoring, 5 October 2024; [Iranian missiles overwhelmed Israeli defences at some sites \[...\]](#), Wall Street Journal, 4 October 2024; [How Iran’s missile strike on Israel appears to hit some targets](#), NPR, 2 October 2024; [Iranian missiles hit Israeli military sites, visuals show](#), Washington Post, 4 October 2024

- “David’s sling”, to target longer-range rockets and missiles from a distance of 300 km
- “Arrow 2” and “Arrow 3”, to defend against medium and longer-range missiles.

The BBC reported all three systems were used against the October attack.<sup>21</sup>

One person, a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank, was killed. There are reports that three people were injured in Jordan after rockets fell.<sup>22</sup>

Iran has been accumulating a substantial stockpile of missiles, rockets, and drones for several decades, many of which can target Israel.<sup>23</sup> The UK, among other European states and the US, sanctions Iran’s missile, nuclear and other weapons programmes: see section 3 of the Commons Library briefing [Israel-Iran April 2024](#).

## 2.2 Iranian and allied statements on the attack

On 1 October 2024, Iran’s IRGC issued a statement on the attack, saying it was a response to the killing of Hamas’s political leader Ismail Haniyeh in July 2024 in Tehran and, in September 2024, the killing of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasallah and IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan in Lebanon.<sup>24</sup>

Iran’s Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, said the attack against Israel was an “exercise [of] self-defence under article 51 of the UN charter”<sup>25</sup> and the action was “concluded unless the Israeli regime decides to invite further retaliation”. He said Iran’s response would be “stronger and more powerful”.<sup>26</sup>

The Foreign Minister said “any third country that assists Israel or allows its airspace to be used against Iran will be considered a legitimate target”.<sup>27</sup> Reports suggest this message has been reiterated directly to Arab Gulf

---

<sup>21</sup> [What are Israel’s Iron Dome, David’s Sling, and Arrow defence missile defences?](#), BBC News, 3 October 2024

<sup>22</sup> [Gazan buried as only known victim of Iranian barrage against Israel](#), Arab News, 2 October 2024; [Three reportedly injured as Iranian rockets fell in Jordan](#), BBC Monitoring, 2 October 2024

<sup>23</sup> CSIS, [The Iranian missile threat](#), 30 May 2019; US Institute for Peace, [Iran’s missiles: timeline of attacks](#), 12 April 2024

<sup>24</sup> [IRGC issues statement after missile attack on Israel](#), Mehr News Agency, 1 October 2024

<sup>25</sup> Self-defence under [Article 51 of the UN Charter](#) is the only right recognised by all states internationally to take unilateral military action if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.

<sup>26</sup> [Iran says action against Israel concluded \[...\]](#), Reuters, 2 October 2024; Iranian FM: [Iran’s response to any Israeli aggression will be stronger](#), Iranian Student’s News Agency, 6 October 2024

<sup>27</sup> [Iran gambles with Israel attack after humiliating blows to allies](#), BBC News, 2 October 2024

states.<sup>28</sup> The Foreign Minister has also said American troops are “at risk” if deployed to operate missile systems in Israel (see below, section 2.3).<sup>29</sup>

Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, said the October 2024 action was “entirely legal and legitimate” and that Iran would “fulfil any duty it deems necessary in this regard [‘punishing’ Israel] without delay or haste”.<sup>30</sup>

The chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Major General Mohammed Hossein Baqeri, has said that “if Israel retaliates, we will target all its infrastructure”, and this could include economic as well as military sites.<sup>31</sup>

The Iranian Foreign Minister has also said that if Israel attacks any Iranian infrastructure, there will be “an even stronger response”.<sup>32</sup>

Hamas and other Iran-backed armed and terrorist groups welcomed the Iranian action and said they would take further steps if Israel or its allies, such as the US, retaliated.<sup>33</sup> Iraqi and Syrian militias have been carrying out attacks against Israel and American military bases in the region since October 2023.<sup>34</sup> The Houthis have claimed an attack against Tel Aviv in October 2024 and say such attacks will continue.<sup>35</sup>

In October 2024 Iranian parliamentarians began initial discussions on a potential “defence-security pact” which could create a “common defence structure designed to counter external threats” and a “joint military headquarters” to coordinate the actions of Iran and other groups. The [IRGC’s Quds Force](#) already helps train and coordinate actions overseas.<sup>36</sup>

During 2024, Oman has facilitated indirect talks between American and Iranian officials to prevent greater escalation in the region. On 14 October, Iran said it had halted these talks “for the time being [...] [and] until we can pass the current crisis”. The US has not issued any statements.<sup>37</sup>

## Further reading on the Iranian attack

- RUSI, [Operation Days of Repentance: The impact of Israel’s strike on Iran](#), 28 October 2024

<sup>28</sup> [Gulf states must not allow use of airspace against Iran, says Iranian official](#), Reuters, 9 October 2024; [Iran’s secret warning to US Allies](#), Wall Street Journal, 10 October 2024

<sup>29</sup> [Iran says US troops “at risk” if deployed to operate missile system in Israel](#), BBC Monitoring, 13 October 2024

<sup>30</sup> Office of the Supreme Leader of Iran, [The armed forces’ action \[...\]](#), 4 October 2024

<sup>31</sup> [Iran military chief warns of broader aerial attacks](#), Fars News Agency, 2 October 2024

<sup>32</sup> [Iran warns Israel not to attack its infrastructure](#), Arab News, 8 October 2024

<sup>33</sup> US Institute for Peace, [Tehran and allies: Iran’s missile assault](#), 2 October 2024; [US bases would be target if US joins any response against Iran, Iraqi armed groups say](#), Reuters, 1 October 2024

<sup>34</sup> See section 7 of Commons Library, [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: US, UN and regional response](#)

<sup>35</sup> [IDF shoots down drones targeting central Israel](#), Times of Israel, 3 October 2024

<sup>36</sup> [Iranian parl. Discusses defense pact with resistance groups](#), Mehr News Agency, 8 October 2024

<sup>37</sup> [Iran says it halted indirect talks with US in Oman](#), Times of Israel, 14 October 2024

- Carnegie Endowment, [Iran is at strategic crossroads](#), 3 October 2024
- International Crisis Group, [A wider Middle East war can still be stopped](#), 2 October 2024
- Royal United Services Institute, [Iran's missile attack is a challenge Israel can't ignore](#), 2 October 2024
- Wilson Center, [Israel weighs retaliation after massive Iranian missile barrage](#), 2 October 2024
- Italian Institute for International Political Studies, [Israel-Iran: dangerous escalation](#), 2 October 2024
- Chatham House, [Neither Iran nor Israel will win in this fight](#), 28 September 2024

## 2.3 UK and foreign participation in Israeli defence

Israel was supported by the US and other allies, including the UK.

### United Kingdom

The UK already has RAF and other military assets in the Middle East region as part of Operation Shader (against Islamic State/Daesh) in Syria and Iraq. Additional UK forces have been deployed since 7 October 2023 to deter conflict in the region from escalating.<sup>38</sup>

Following the Iranian missile attack on 1 October 2024, the Ministry of Defence said that British forces had “played their part in attempts to prevent further escalation” and that “the UK stands fully behind Israel’s right to defend its country and its people against threats”.<sup>39</sup>

The Ministry of Defence later said that two RAF Typhoon fighter jets and a Voyager air-to-air refuelling aircraft had “played an important part in wider deterrence and efforts to prevent further escalation” but that due to the nature of the attack “they did not engage any targets”.<sup>40</sup> Unlike drones, which the RAF intercepted during [the Iranian attack on Israel in April 2024](#), typhoon jets are not equipped to track and target ballistic missiles.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Defence, [UK military activity in the Middle East](#), 13 April 2024; Royal Navy, [HMS Duncan to protect vital shipping routes](#), 27 May 2024

<sup>39</sup> Ministry of Defence on X/Twitter, [“A statement from Defence Secretary”](#), 1 October 2024

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Defence on X/Twitter [“An update following yesterday’s attack”](#), 2 October 2024

<sup>41</sup> [What is the state of the Royal Navy’s anti-ballistic missile capability?](#), Navy Lookout, 7 October 2024

The Type 45 destroyer HMS Duncan, which is deployed in the region, was not involved.<sup>42</sup>

On a visit to the RAF base in Cyprus on 2 October, Defence Secretary John Healey said: “the situation across the Middle East is extremely serious and de-escalation remains our focus”.<sup>43</sup>

When asked in the House of Commons on 7 October 2024 about any potential British involvement in Israel’s response to the 1 October attacks, the Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the UK’s involvement so far related to “Israel’s self-defence”, support that the UK “would always be prepared to provide”.<sup>44</sup>

## United States

Since 7 October 2023 the [US has expanded its military presence in the Middle East](#).

Following the Iranian missile attack on 1 October, the US Department of Defense confirmed that US military forces deployed in the region had “coordinated closely with the Israeli Defence Forces to help defend Israel”.<sup>45</sup>

Two of the US’s guided missile destroyers based in the region, the USS Cole and the USS Bulkeley, fired approximately 12 interceptor missiles, destroying incoming Iranian ballistic missiles. The Department of Defense confirmed that no other US military assets in the region were deployed on this occasion.<sup>46</sup>

Going forward, the US Defense Secretary, Lloyd Austin, confirmed that:

Our forces remain postured to protect U.S. troops and partners in the Middle East, and the Department maintains significant capability to defend our people, provide further support for Israel's self-defense, and deter further escalation.<sup>47</sup>

On 13 October, the US said it would commit a Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defence system and US troops to operate it, to Israel. It said this “underscores the United States’ ironclad commitment to the defence of Israel”. THAAD was previously deployed to the Middle East following the 7 October 2023 attacks.<sup>48</sup>

## Other partners

- France: In a statement on 2 October 2024, the French Foreign Ministry confirmed that it had “helped ward off the Iranian threat with its military capabilities in the Middle East” and called for an end to military

---

<sup>42</sup> [What is the state of the Royal Navy’s anti-ballistic missile capability?](#), Navy Lookout, 7 October 2024

<sup>43</sup> Ministry of Defence, [De-escalation remains our focus](#), 2 October 2024

<sup>44</sup> HC Deb, [7 October 2024](#), c30

<sup>45</sup> US Department of Defense, [Pentagon Press Secretary briefing](#), 1 October 2024

<sup>46</sup> As above

<sup>47</sup> US Department of Defense, [Statement by Secretary of Defense](#), 1 October 2024

<sup>48</sup> US Department of Defense, [Statement by Pentagon Press Secretary \[...\]](#), 13 October 2024

escalation in the region.<sup>49</sup> It did not provide detail of the French military assets involved.

- **Jordan:** The Jordanian Government has said that air defences and assets of the Royal Jordanian Air Force had intercepted “a number of missiles and drones that entered Jordanian airspace”.<sup>50</sup> The Jordanian Foreign Minister, Ayman Safadi, has reportedly warned Iran and Israel that Jordan will “defend itself with all its capabilities against any threat” and that “Jordan will not be anyone’s battlefield”.<sup>51</sup> While Jordan has had a peace agreement with Israel since 1994, it is not an ally. The Jordanian Government has been critical of both Israeli and Iranian actions.<sup>52</sup>

## 2.4 Israeli statements on potential response

### Statements condemning the attack

On 1 October 2024 Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Iran had “made a big mistake [...] and it will pay for it”.<sup>53</sup> He later said that “no country in the world would have accepted such an attack” and Israel has “an obligation to respond to Iran”.<sup>54</sup>

An IDF spokesperson described the attack as “severe and dangerous escalation”, while the Foreign Minister Israel Katz said Iran had “crossed the red line”.<sup>55</sup>

### Statements on potential Israeli response

The IDF said that Israel “will respond wherever, whenever and however we choose” to the Iranian attack and that its operational plans “are ready”.<sup>56</sup> It said that the response will be “serious and significant”.<sup>57</sup>

On 6 October, Israeli Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant, said that in terms of an Israeli response, “at the moment, everything is on the table”.<sup>58</sup> On 9 October, he said that Iran’s attack was “aggressive and imprecise” and that the Israeli “attack will be deadly, precise and above all surprising”.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, [Statement: Situation in the Middle East](#), 2 October 2024

<sup>50</sup> [“Jordanian authorities face backlash over role in downing Iranian missiles”](#), Middle East Eye, 2 October 2024

<sup>51</sup> [“Jordan FM tells Iran and Israel country will defend itself”](#), The Times of Israel, 2 October 2024

<sup>52</sup> See Congressional Research Service, [Jordan: Background and US relations](#) (PDF), July 2024

<sup>53</sup> [Israel’s Netanyahu says Iran made a big mistake and will pay](#), Reuters, 1 October 2024

<sup>54</sup> [PM Netanyahu: no country would accept the attack from Iran](#), Jerusalem Post, 5 October 2024

<sup>55</sup> US Institute for Peace, [Iran’s missile assault on Israel](#), 2 October 2024

<sup>56</sup> [IDF spokesperson says Israel will respond \[...\]](#), Times of Israel, 1 October 2024

<sup>57</sup> [IDF planning “serious and significant” response](#), Times of Israel, 5 October 2024

<sup>58</sup> [Israeli official warns “everything is on the table”](#), Fox News, 6 October 2024

<sup>59</sup> [Israel’s response to Iranian missile attack will “lethal and surprising”](#), Telegraph, 9 October 2024

Former Israeli Prime Minister (in office 2021 to 2022) Naftali Bennet has argued Israel should strike Iran’s nuclear facilities in what he said was a “one-time window of opportunity in which we have both the legitimacy and the ability to severely damage the Iranian regime and its nuclear programme”.<sup>60</sup> Leader of the Opposition Yair Lapid has said Israel should attack Iranian oil facilities.<sup>61</sup>

In response to a question whether the US has discussed potential Israeli targeting of Iranian nuclear sites or oil facilities (both opposed by the US – see section 4.2), on 7 October US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said he would not discuss “private diplomatic conversations”, but US-Israel talks would continue.<sup>62</sup>

## Iran’s nuclear programme

Iran continues to enrich uranium past the level considered necessary for a civilian nuclear programme, which its government says remains its sole purpose. In 2024, there has been debate within Iran for a change to its nuclear policy. Some analysts now consider Iran as capable of producing sufficient nuclear material for a warhead almost immediately, though developing a useable nuclear warhead would take one to two years.<sup>63</sup>

In October 2024 the CIA Director William Burns said “we do not see evidence today that the [Iranian] supreme leader has reversed the decision that he took at the end of 2003 to suspend the weaponization program”, but Iran has developed the “means of delivery” for a warhead if it chose to develop one.<sup>64</sup>

The Commons Library research briefing, [What is the status of Iran’s nuclear programme and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action?](#) has more on Iran’s nuclear programme and the international response.

Analysts judge that an Israeli strike against nuclear facilities would be difficult, facing challenges such as distance, the need to refuel and fly over the airspaces of other countries, and Iranian air defence. Many of Iran’s nuclear facilities are also underground. Such a strike is considered to require US support to succeed. Israel has been linked to sabotage and other forms of disruption against Iran’s nuclear programme in the past.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> [Bennet urges Israeli strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities](#), Times of Israel, 8 October 2024

<sup>61</sup> [Yair Lapid: “Israel should bomb Iran’s oil facilities”](#), Ynet News, 7 October 2024

<sup>62</sup> US Department of State, [Department press briefing](#), 7 October 2024

<sup>63</sup> See Commons Library, [What is the status of Iran’s nuclear programme and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action?](#); [Why are calls rising in Iran for a change in nuclear policy?](#), BBC Monitoring, 10 October 2024; [Iran’s nuclear policy and regional security concerns](#), Tehran Times, 12 October 2024

<sup>64</sup> [There is no evidence Iran has decided to rush forward building a nuclear weapon, CIA director says](#), NBC News, 8 October 2024

<sup>65</sup> Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, [Iran vs Israel redux](#), 1 October 2024; [Can Israel destroy Iran’s nuclear facilities by itself?](#), FT, 4 October 2024; [Washington worries the Israelis will bomb Iran’s nuclear sites. But can they?](#), New York Times, 7 October 2024



## Iran's oil production

In 2023, Iran produced around 3% of the world's oil, or around 4 million barrels a day.<sup>66</sup> Around 90% of its exports are shipped from [Kharg Island terminal](#), in southern Iran. On 6 October, the Iranian Oil Minister visited the port to assess the port's security and meet with local IRGC commanders.<sup>67</sup>

Iranian oil is sanctioned by the US. China is the main importer of Iranian oil, with an estimated 15% of its imports coming from Iran.<sup>68</sup> Reports in October 2024 that Israel may strike Iranian oil facilities caused global crude oil prices to rise, though they remained lower than in the majority of 2024. Analysts judge that in the event of an Israeli strike, other oil producers could increase production to compensate for the loss of Iranian oil.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Energy Information Administration, [What countries are the top producers and consumers of oil2, 2023](#)

<sup>67</sup> [Iran's oil minister visits oil export terminal as Israeli strike feared](#), Reuters, 6 October 2024; [Oil minister visits Kharg to check oil installations security](#), Tehran Times, 6 October 2024

<sup>68</sup> Energy Information Administration, [China imported record amounts of crude oil in 2023](#), 16 April 2024; [China buys nearly all of Iran's oil exports \[...\]](#), New York Times, 4 October 2024

<sup>69</sup> [Tensions are rising in the Middle East, but the rise in oil prices is muted \[...\]](#), NPR, 3 October 2024

## 3 Israeli attack on Iran, 26 October 2024

### 3.1 Israeli air strikes

On 26 October 2024 Israel launched air strikes at Iran, hitting locations in the capital, Tehran, and in the western province of Ilam and south-western Khuzestan. The Iranian army said four soldiers were killed in the attacks and one civilian.<sup>70</sup>

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said it carried out several waves of attacks, targeting missile and drone manufacturing sites and aerial defences.<sup>71</sup> It said these were “precise” and in response to “months of continuous attacks” from Iran.<sup>72</sup> Iran’s nuclear facilities were not impacted by the attacks, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency said.<sup>73</sup>

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said “we kept our promise” and the Israeli air force “hit Iran’s defense capabilities and missile production”.<sup>74</sup> In November, Mr Netanyahu also said that “there is a specific component in their nuclear programme that was hit in this attack” but did not state what this was.<sup>75</sup>

The Israeli strikes destroyed Iran’s three remaining S-300 air defence systems (the fourth having been reportedly destroyed in Israel’s attack on Iran in April 2024).<sup>76</sup>

BBC Verify analysed satellite imagery showing damage to several military sites in Iran.<sup>77</sup> The AP news agency also suggested the attacks had also damaged a base used by the ICG to build ballistic missiles.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>70</sup> [Israeli strikes on Iran kill four soldiers, Iran says](#), BBC News, 26 October 2024; [Iran raises the death toll from the Israeli attack to 4 killed, all from country’s military air defence](#), AP, 26 October 2024

<sup>71</sup> [What we know about Israel’s attack on Iran](#), BBC News, 28 October 2024; Institute for the Study of War, [Iran update 26 October 2024](#)

<sup>72</sup> IDF on Twitter/X, [“In response to months of continuous attacks from the regime”](#), 26 October 2024

<sup>73</sup> [UN watchdog: Iran nuclear sites ‘not impacted’ by strikes \[...\]](#), The Times of Israel, 26 October 2024

<sup>74</sup> [Netanyahu: Attack on Iran was precise, powerful \[...\]](#), The Times of Israel, 27 October 2024

<sup>75</sup> [Netanyahu says Israel’s October attack hit a component in Iran’s nuclear programme](#), Reuters, 18 November 2024

<sup>76</sup> As above and [Israel took out primary Iranian air defenses \[...\]](#), The Times of Israel, 30 October 2024; [Israeli strike on Iran also hit Russian arms industry’s once-strong image](#), Wall Street Journal, 28 October 2024

<sup>77</sup> [What satellite images reveal about Israel’s strikes on Iran](#), BBC News, 29 October 2024

<sup>78</sup> [Satellite photos show Israeli strike likely hit important IRGC missile base](#), AP News, 30 October 2024

The Iranian Defence Minister dismissed the report on the missile base.<sup>79</sup> The Iranian said that the Israeli attack “caused limited damage and a few radar systems were damaged”.<sup>80</sup>

The defence think tank RUSI said that the Israeli operation was “more extensive” than in April 2024, but judged it a “restrained response” aimed at emphasising Israel’s conventional military superiority and targeting missile production facilities. The RUSI analysis suggested that striking Tehran “makes public the Israeli ability to hit Iran’s capital and defeat its air defences” but the apparent avoidance of civilian areas “makes this look far more precise than the equivalent Iranian attack”.<sup>81</sup>

Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid criticised the government’s decision “not to attack strategic and economic targets in Iran [as] wrong” and suggested “we could and should have exacted a much heavier price from Iran”.<sup>82</sup>

## 3.2 Iranian reaction and statements

In a statement following the attacks, on 26 October 2024 the Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned the airstrikes as a “blatant violation of international law and the UN charter”. It emphasised Iran’s right to self-defence under article 51 of the charter. The Ministry blamed Israel’s military actions in Gaza and Lebanon as “the main cause of tension and insecurity in the region” and urged the global community to bring to an end Israeli actions there.<sup>83</sup>

Iran’s Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, wrote to the UN Secretary-General and members of the UN Security Council calling for an emergency council meeting (the Security Council met on 28 October, see below, section 4.5).<sup>84</sup> He argued that Israeli actions risked deepening instability, describing the air strikes as an “aggressive act” and “not an isolated incident but part of a systematic approach to war and regional destabilization”. He said Iran “reserves its inherent right to respond to this criminal aggression”.<sup>85</sup>

The Foreign Minister also accused the United States of complicity for enabling the action.<sup>86</sup> The US said it did not participate in the military operation.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> [Iran can hit Israel with dozens more operations, warns DM](#), Tehran Times, 30 October 2024

<sup>80</sup> [Iran says four soldiers killed, radar systems hit in Israeli strikes](#), Al Jazeera, 26 October 2024

<sup>81</sup> Matthew Savill and Dr Burcu Ozcelik, [Operation Days of Repentance: The impact of Israel’s strikes on Iran](#), 28 October 2024

<sup>82</sup> [Lapid criticizes Israeli strikes on Iran \[...\]](#), The Times of Israel, 26 October 2024

<sup>83</sup> Iranian Foreign Ministry, [Foreign Ministry statement 26 October 2024](#)

<sup>84</sup> [Araghchi calls for UN action against dangerous escalation of Israeli aggression](#), Tehran Times, 27 October 2024

<sup>85</sup> As above

<sup>86</sup> As above

<sup>87</sup> White House, [Background press call on Israel’s targeted strikes against \[...\] Iran](#), 25 October 2024

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei did not issue any direct threats of retaliation in a speech immediately following the attacks. He said senior officials would decide on Iran's response: "the manner of making the Zionist regime [Israeli Government] understand the power and resolve of the Iranian nation is up to our officials, who will take whatever action best serves this country".<sup>88</sup> However, on 2 November 2024 he said that Iran would conduct a crushing response" against Israel or the United states, saying:

the enemies, whether the Zionist regime [the Israeli Government] or the United States of America, will definitely receive a crushing response to what they are doing to Iran and the Iranian nation and to the resistance front [referring to Iran-backed armed and terrorist groups, such as Hamas and Hezbollah].<sup>89</sup>

On 1 November the head of the IRGC, Major General Hossein Salami, also said Iran's response would be "unimaginable" adding "you have not forgotten [...] how Iranian missiles opened up the sky [...] and made you [Israel] sleepless".<sup>90</sup>

### Further reading on potential Iranian response

- Washington Post, [Iran's Khamenei warns of "crushing" response to Israeli strikes](#), 2 November 2024
- Washington Institute, [How to judge Iranian response options against Israel](#), 1 November 2024
- US Institute for Peace, [What's next for Israel, Iran and prospects for a wider war in the Middle East?](#), 30 October 2024
- International Institute for Strategic Studies, [Israel's attack leaves Iran with a difficult dilemma](#), 28 October 2024

---

<sup>88</sup> [Iran's supreme leader signals measured response to Israel's attack](#), Financial Times, 27 October 2024

<sup>89</sup> AP, [Iran's supreme leader threatens Israel and US with 'a crushing response' over Israeli attack](#), 3 November 2024

<sup>90</sup> Oil prices rise after Iranian commanders vow response to Israeli attack, Financial Times, 1 November 2024

## 4 International reaction and statements

### 4.1 Statement of G7 leaders

On 2 October 2024, G7 leaders held talks to discuss Iran’s “unacceptable attack against Israel and coordinate a response to this attack, including sanctions”.<sup>91</sup> President Biden said after the discussion that “all seven of us agree that they [Israel] have a right to respond, but they should respond in proportion”.<sup>92</sup>

The G7 is formed of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, United States, and the European Union.

On 3 October 2024, the leaders of the G7 countries issued a statement in which they condemned “in the strongest terms” Iran’s attack on Israel, which they said “constitutes a serious threat to regional stability”. They reiterated their commitment to Israel’s security and said that military escalation in the Middle East was “in no one’s interest”. The statement subsequently called on all parties to act with restraint and “engage constructively to de-escalate the current tensions”.<sup>93</sup>

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said it was “important” for the G7 to “speak so powerfully together with a coordinated and collaborative approach” to hold Iran accountable.<sup>94</sup>

The G7 has not issued a statement following Israel’s attack on Iran at the time of writing (4 November 2024). The next G7 Foreign Ministers meeting is scheduled to be held on 25 to 26 November 2024.<sup>95</sup>

### 4.2 United States

On 1 October 2024, the US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller described the Iranian attack as a “brazen, unacceptable attack by Iran and

<sup>91</sup> White House, [Readout of President Biden’s call with the G7](#), 2 October 2024

<sup>92</sup> White House, [Remarks by President Biden before Air Force One departure](#), 2 October 2024

<sup>93</sup> [G7 Leader’s Statement on recent developments in the Middle East](#), 3 October 2024

<sup>94</sup> [HC Deb 7 October 2024 c29](#)

<sup>95</sup> G7 Italy Presidency, Ministerial meetings calendar, accessed 4 November 2024

every nation in the world must join us in condemning it”. President Biden also said American support for Israel “is ironclad”.<sup>96</sup>

## US statements on potential Israeli response

Following the October 2024 attack, President Biden said it was an “active discussion” on how Israel would respond, and his administration was in “constant” contact with Israel on the topic.<sup>97</sup> He said the Israeli response should be “proportion[al]” and the US was “giving them that advice”.<sup>98</sup>

President Biden has said he opposes any Israeli retaliatory strikes targeting Iran’s nuclear sites.<sup>99</sup>

Speaking on 4 October, President Biden also said “if I were in their shoes [Israel], I’d be thinking about other alternatives than striking oil fields”.<sup>100</sup>

A spokesperson for the US Department of Defence said on 7 October that discussions were “informed” by prevention of a wider conflict:

we recognize Israel's right to respond to the attack that Iran conducted, the massive missile attack they conducted recently. But again, ultimately what we are working very hard towards is a regional de-escalation and the prevention of a wider regional conflict. And so, that will continue to inform our efforts and it will continue to be a topic of discussion.<sup>101</sup>

The CIA Director, William Burns, said on 7 October that he assessed neither Iran nor Israel are looking for an “all-out conflict” but that “misjudgements” could lead to escalation.<sup>102</sup>

Former President and current Republican presidential candidate in the 2024 election, Donald Trump, has said Israel should “hit the nuclear first, and worry about the rest later”, describing nuclear weapons as the “biggest risk we have”.<sup>103</sup>

The US administration also said it was in discussion with G7 leaders on “consequences” for Iran, which will include sanctions. It said it would not preview these actions.<sup>104</sup> Section 4.3 has more on sanctions.

---

<sup>96</sup> US State Department, [Department press briefing](#), 1 October 2024

<sup>97</sup> White House, [Remarks by President Biden](#), 1 October 2024; White House, [Press briefings by President Biden](#), 4 October 2024

<sup>98</sup> White House, [Remarks by President Biden](#), 2 October 2024

<sup>99</sup> [Biden opposes any Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear sites](#), BBC News, 2 October 2024

<sup>100</sup> White House, [Press briefings by President Biden](#), 4 October 2024

<sup>101</sup> US Department of Defense, [Pentagon press secretary \[...\] press briefing](#), 7 October 2024

<sup>102</sup> [CIA directory warns “misjudgements” could further escalate conflict](#), CBS News, 7 October 2024

<sup>103</sup> [Israel should strike Iran’s nuclear facilities, says Trump](#), Telegraph, 5 October 2024

<sup>104</sup> White House, [Press briefings by President Biden](#), 4 October 2024

## US response to Israel attack on 26 October 2024

In an official briefing, an unnamed senior White House administration official described Israel's attacks as "targeted" and "precision airstrikes against multiple military targets across Iran and outside populated areas". They said that the US "was not a participant in this military operation".<sup>105</sup>

The official said President Biden had encouraged Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to "design a response that served to deter further attacks against Israel while reducing risk of further escalation".<sup>106</sup>

While stating the US would continue to be prepared to defend Israel against any Iranian attacks, he said the Israeli airstrikes should be the "end of the direct exchange of fire between Israel and Iran" and that "Israel has made clear to the world that its response is now complete".<sup>107</sup>

A Pentagon spokesperson also said that by targeting military targets, Israel's response was a "way to off ramp" and urged Iran not to respond.<sup>108</sup>

President Biden said he hoped Israel's strike on Iran would be "the end" of the cycle of escalation.<sup>109</sup>

### Further reading on US policy on Iran and the region

- Middle East Institute, [Expert Views: A US regional response to the security threats posed by Iran and its proxies](#), 22 October 2024
- Atlantic Council, [A bipartisan Iran strategy for the \[...\] next two decades](#), 8 October 2024
- Chatham House, [Lasting Israel-Palestine peace will not be possible without a new policy to neutralise the Iranian threat](#), 7 October 2024
- Foreign Affairs, [How the US can restore deterrence and pull the region back from the brink](#), 3 October 2024

---

<sup>105</sup> White House, [Background press call on Israel's targeted strikes against military targets in Iran](#), 25 October 2024

<sup>106</sup> As above

<sup>107</sup> As above

<sup>108</sup> US Department of Defense, [Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh holds an off-camera, on-the-record press briefing](#), 28 October 2024

<sup>109</sup> [Joe Biden says he hopes latest Israeli strike on Iran will end escalation](#), The Observer, 26 October 2024

## 4.3

## United Kingdom

**Reaction to Iranian strikes on Israel on 1 October 2024**

In a statement to the House of Commons on 7 October 2024, Prime Minister Keir Starmer told the House that he “utterly condemn[ed] this attack” and said Israel had the right to defend itself in line with international law.<sup>110</sup>

He said Iran’s missile attack could not be described as “defensive” but rather an “act of aggression and a major escalation in response to the death of a terrorist leader”. He said the attack illustrated Iran’s “malign role in the region” and its support for Hamas, the Houthis, and Hezbollah. The Prime Minister said that “all sides” must “step back from the brink”.<sup>111</sup>

In response to questions from MPs on suspending arms exports to Israel in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict, the Prime Minister said he did “not agree with a complete ban on arms sales” as this would include sales for defensive purposes and the Iranian missile attack demonstrated why these were necessary.<sup>112</sup>

The Prime Minister also said it was “important” for the G7 to “speak so powerfully together with a coordinated and collaborative approach” to hold Iran accountable.<sup>113</sup>

**Response in the UK Parliament to 1 October Iranian attack**

The Leader of the Opposition, Rishi Sunak, said “we stand unequivocally by Israel’s right to defend itself” and the Iranian attack was a “stark reminder of the existential threat” that Israel faces.<sup>114</sup>

Members of the Liberal Democrats, including Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Calum Miller, have tabled an early day motion stating that while Israel has the right to defend itself and neutralised Iran’s attack, “the best way” to keep its citizens safe and secure “is not to retaliate and risk a regional war”.<sup>115</sup>

The Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Sir Ed Davey, said it was “right” for UK forces to support the defence of Israel and that the government should take a “tougher stance on Iran [...] [and] proscribe Iran’s IRGC [Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps]”.<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> HC Deb, [7 October 2024](#), c23

<sup>111</sup> HC Deb, [7 October 2024](#), c23

<sup>112</sup> HC Deb, [7 October 2024](#), c31

<sup>113</sup> HC Deb, [7 October 2024](#), c33

<sup>114</sup> Rishi Sunak on Twitter/X, “[Tonight’s attacks on Israel by Iran \[...\]](#).” 1 October 2024

<sup>115</sup> Early Day Motion, [Conflict in the Middle East, EDM207](#), 7 October 2024

<sup>116</sup> HC Deb, [7 October 2024](#), c27



The Prime Minister said the government was “working at pace to identify further ways” to deal with states threats, including from the IRGC.<sup>117</sup>

## Current and potential sanctions against Iran

The US, EU and United Kingdom apply a range of sanctions against Iran, including against the IRGC in its entirety, and against Iran’s missile and drone programmes. The US also has extensive sanctions against the Iranian economy, including its oil sector. Section 3 of the Commons Library briefing, [Israel-Iran April 2024](#), provides a summary.

In response to the April 2024 attack on Iran, the Israeli Government called on other states to apply sanctions against Iran and to implement the “snapback” measures of the 2015 nuclear agreement, reinstating some of the sanctions relieved as part of the agreement. These would include a UN arms embargo against Iran, which has now expired (though the UK is among those to continue to impose the restriction). In the UK Parliament, there is also an ongoing debate on proscribing the IRGC as a terrorist group (it is currently sanctioned in its entirety, but not proscribed).<sup>118</sup>

Following the Iranian attack on Israel in October 2024, the US expanded its sanctions against Iran’s petroleum and petrochemical sectors to restrict Iranian government revenue.<sup>119</sup> The UK has announced sanctions against members of the Iranian army, air force and IRGC intelligence, as well as two organisations involved in weapons and space technology.<sup>120</sup> The UK currently applies 423 sanctions against Iran.<sup>121</sup> The EU has also introduced sanctions prohibiting the export, transfer, supply, or sale from the EU to Iran of components used in the development and production of missiles and UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles—drones).<sup>122</sup>

Section 3 of the Commons Library [Israel-Iran April 2024](#) briefing has more on American, British and European sanctions, as of April 2024. Section 2 of the Commons Library [Iran’s influence in the Middle East](#) has more on sanctions against Iran and Iran-supported groups in the region.

<sup>117</sup> HC Deb, [7 October 2024](#), c28

<sup>118</sup> Commons Library briefing, [Israel-Iran April 2024](#), section 3

<sup>119</sup> US Treasury Department, [Treasury expands targeted sanctions \[...\]](#), 11 October 2024; US State Department, [Sanctioning entities that have trade in Iran’s petroleum](#), 11 October 2024

<sup>120</sup> FCDO, [UK announces sanctions against Iranian military figures and organisations](#), 14 October 2024

<sup>121</sup> Gov.UK, [The UK sanctions list](#), accessed 14 October 2024

<sup>122</sup> Council of the European Union, [EU widens restrictive measures in view of Iran \[...\]](#), 18 November 2024

## Reaction to Israeli strikes on Iran on 26 October 2024

Prime Minister Keir Starmer urged Iran not to respond to Israeli airstrikes on 26 October. He said the UK supported Israel's right to defend itself but also called for all sides to show restraint and avoid further regional escalation.<sup>123</sup>

The Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, gave a [statement to the House of Commons](#) on 27 October 2024. He described the Israeli strikes as a response to Iran's "escalatory ballistic missile attacks on Israel", which were, he said "the latest in a long history of malign Iranian activity". He said the priority now is de-escalation; he called on all sides to exercise restraint, adding that escalation "is in no one's interest".<sup>124</sup> He called on Iran to not respond. The Foreign Secretary said that no UK troops were involved in the Israeli action.<sup>125</sup>

### Response in the UK Parliament to 26 October attack by Israel

The then Shadow Foreign Secretary, Andrew Mitchell, supported Israel's right to defend itself and said "it has done so in a precise and targeted way". He joined the government in urging restraint and said the onus is on Iran to desist from any retaliatory action.<sup>126</sup>

The Liberal Democrat spokesperson, Calum Miller, backed the government's efforts to engage with Iran and Israel to urge an end to the cycle of retaliatory violence. He called on the government to proscribe the IRGC.<sup>127</sup>

## 4.4

## European Union

The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, said that the EU "condemns in the strongest terms Iran's attack" and that it was committed to Israel's security. It said the EU was "fully committed to lower the tensions" and called on all parties to exercise restraint.<sup>128</sup> The EU reiterated its call for all parties to exercise restraint in a statement after Israel's attacks on 26 October and expressed concern about the cycle of attacks and retaliations.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>123</sup> [British PM Starmer says Iran should not respond to Israeli strikes](#), Reuters, 26 October 2024

<sup>124</sup> [HC Deb 28 October 2024 c545](#)

<sup>125</sup> [HC Deb 28 October 2024 c550](#)

<sup>126</sup> [HC Deb 28 October 2024 c547](#)

<sup>127</sup> [HC Deb 28 October 2024 c549](#)

<sup>128</sup> Council of the European Union, [Statement by the High Representative](#), 1 October 2024

<sup>129</sup> EU, [Israel/Iran: Statement by the spokesperson \[...\]](#), 26 October 2024

## 4.5

## UN and UN Security Council

An [emergency meeting of the UN Security Council](#) was held on 2 October 2024. UN Security Council members called for de-escalation in the region, in line with existing Security Council resolutions.<sup>130</sup>

At the meeting the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, condemned Iran's attack on Israel, saying "these attacks paradoxically do nothing to support the cause of the Palestinian people or reduce their suffering". He called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the cessation of hostilities in Lebanon and a stop to the "deadly cycle of tit-for-tat violence".<sup>131</sup>

The Israeli Government criticised the UN Secretary General's [initial response to the Iranian attacks](#), which it said had failed to directly condemn Iran. The Israeli Foreign Minister declared Secretary General Guterres "persona non grata" and banned him from entering Israel.<sup>132</sup>

The UN described the ban as a political statement. UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric described the move as "one more attack on the United Nations staff that we've seen from the government of Israel".<sup>133</sup> US State Department spokesperson, Matthew Miller, said the Israeli step was "not productive to improving Israel's standing in the world".<sup>134</sup>

Following Israel's strikes on Iran on 26 October 2024, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said the UN Secretary-General was "deeply alarmed by the continued escalation in the Middle East". He reiterated his appeal to all parties to cease all military actions and to seek a diplomatic solution.<sup>135</sup>

The UN Security Council met on 28 October 2024 at the request of Council members Algeria, China, and Russia.<sup>136</sup>

Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East and Asia and the Pacific, to the meeting that "both sides must stop testing the limits of each other's restraint". Several countries warned of the risk of such attacks to be exacerbating regional insecurity. The Council did not issue a statement.<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> UN Audiovisual Library, [Security Council 9738 meeting](#), 2 October 2024

<sup>131</sup> UN, [Secretary General's remarks to the Security Council](#), 2 October 2024

<sup>132</sup> Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs on Twitter/X, "[Today I have declared UN Secretary General \[...\]](#)", 2 October 2024

<sup>133</sup> [UN calls Israel's ban on its top leader a political statement in long-running rift](#), AP, 2 October 2024

<sup>134</sup> US Department of State, [Department press briefing](#), 2 October 2024

<sup>135</sup> UN, [Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General](#), 26 October 2024

<sup>136</sup> UN, [Security Council urges Israel, Iran to cease military actions in preventing all-out war in region](#), 28 October 2024; Security Council Report (not affiliated with the UN) [Emergency meeting on Israeli airstrikes against Iran](#), 28 October 2024

<sup>137</sup> As above

## 4.6

## Response of Russia and China

In the aftermath of the Iranian attack, both the Russian and Chinese governments called for restraint by both sides, although neither has openly condemned Iran's actions. Both countries have argued that the escalation of violence is a result of Israel's actions in Gaza and Lebanon.<sup>138</sup>

On 2 October 2024 Russian Government spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said that the "situation is developing according to the most worrying scenario", and called on all sides to show restraint, saying that Russia condemns "any acts that could lead to the death of the civilian population".<sup>139</sup>

Following Israel's attack on Iran on 26 October, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the "root cause" of the "explosive escalation" was the "failure to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions". Russia called for all stakeholders to exercise restraint, adding "it is high time that efforts to provoke Iran to respond cease".<sup>140</sup> Russia's Ambassador to the UN blamed the US of not trying to talk Israel out of its planned response and said Israel is "intentionally raising tensions", stating Iran had illustrated "unprecedented restraint under the circumstances".<sup>141</sup>

On 2 October 2024 a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, responding to a question about Iran's attack on Israel and Israel's ground offensive in Lebanon:

China is deeply concerned over the turmoil in the Middle East. We oppose the violation of Lebanon's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity and oppose moves that fuel antagonism and escalate tensions. China calls on the international community, especially major countries with influence, to play a constructive role and avoid further turmoil. China believes that the protracted fighting in Gaza is the root cause of this round of turmoil in the Middle East, and all parties need to work urgently for a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire.<sup>142</sup>

On 28 October, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian, when asked about the situation in the Middle East, said China "opposes violating the sovereignty and undermining the security of other countries and opposes the abuse of force". He called on the relevant parties to "refrain from further increasing the overall security risks in the region". Lin Jian also called on "major

---

<sup>138</sup> Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Press release on Foreign Minister Lavrov's meeting with heads of diplomatic missions of Arab states accredited in Moscow](#), 2 October 2024 and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, [Spokesperson's remarks](#), 2 October 2024

<sup>139</sup> ["Kremlin calls for restraint after Iran missile attack on Israel"](#), The Moscow Times, 2 October 2024

<sup>140</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Russia, [Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova's comment on the Israeli airstrikes targeting Iranian territory](#), 26 October 2024

<sup>141</sup> UN, [Emphasizing Need to End Cycle of Violence in Middle East, Security Council Urges Israel, Iran to Cease Military Actions in Preventing All-Out War in Region](#), 28 October 2024

<sup>142</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, [Spokesperson's remarks](#), 2 October 2024

countries with influence” to create the necessary conditions for the de-escalation of regional tensions.<sup>143</sup>

## 4.7

### Statements of Arab Gulf states

The Sunni monarchies of the Arab Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain, have historically been opposed to the Islamic Republic of Iran, seeing its ideology as a threat to their rule and stability. From 2016, Saudi Arabia has led a military coalition against the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen, who have also previously launched attacks against Saudi and UAE oil facilities.<sup>144</sup>

However, since 2023 Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE have sought to restore and strengthen diplomatic ties with Iran. Qatar, Oman and Kuwait have played a more mediatory role with Iran in recent years.<sup>145</sup>

#### Statements during the 2023/24 conflict

During the 2023/24 conflict, Arab Gulf states have been critical of Israeli action in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but Bahrain and the UAE have retained diplomatic ties with Israel, which they established in 2020.<sup>146</sup>

Following the Iranian missile attack in October 2024, analysts judge that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are concerned that Iran or Iran-backed groups may attack their oil facilities in the event of further escalation between Israel and Iran.<sup>147</sup>

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia) held informal talks with Iran on 3 October. The resulting statement said that all parties stressed the “importance of de-escalation and exercising maximum self-restraint”.<sup>148</sup>

The previous day, the GCC had called for immediate ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon.<sup>149</sup>

At the GCC summit in October, the Saudi Foreign Minister said “we intend to close the book on disagreements with Iran forever and develop relations between us like to friends”. The new Iranian president, Masoud Pezeshkian,

<sup>143</sup> Chinese Foreign Ministry, [Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian’s regular press conference](#), 28 October 2024

<sup>144</sup> For a summary of the relationship, see section 3.3 of Commons Library, [Iran’s influence in the Middle East](#)

<sup>145</sup> As above

<sup>146</sup> See section 7, Commons Library, [2023/24 Israel-Hamas conflict: US, UN, EU and regional response](#)

<sup>147</sup> [Gulf states sought to reassure Iran of their neutrality](#), Reuters, 3 October 2024

<sup>148</sup> [Gulf, Iran foreign ministers discuss regional escalation](#), BBC Monitoring, 3 October 2024

<sup>149</sup> Oman Foreign Ministry, [GCC affirms support for Lebanon](#), 3 October 2024

has also expressed a desire to strengthen ties with Saudi Arabia and other powers in the region.<sup>150</sup>

Saudi Arabia condemned Israel's attacks on 26 October and called for restraint and to reduce escalation, warning against the expansion of the conflict that "threatens the security and stability of the countries and people of the region".<sup>151</sup>

The Saudi Foreign Ministry spoke to the Iranian Foreign Minister on 28 October. A subsequent statement said: "both ministers underscored the importance of avoiding any actions that could destabilise the region's security and stability".<sup>152</sup>

The United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Egypt all expressed concern about continued escalation and the security and stability of the region.<sup>153</sup>

Iraq also condemned Israel's use of its airspace to carry out the attack, saying "Iraq will not allow its airspace or land to be used for attacks on other nations, particularly neighbouring countries with whom Iraq shares mutual respect and interests".<sup>154</sup>

Some analysts in 2024 judge that the 2023 rapprochement between Saudi-Iran has helped contain regional escalation but that it remains fragile, with little substantive progress since diplomatic ties were restored. In the longer term, the rapprochement may assist a deal to curtail Iran's nuclear programme, though this will likely require some sanctions against Iran to be lifted.<sup>155</sup>

---

<sup>150</sup> [Saudi Arabia seeks rapprochement with Iran](#), Al Monitor, 3 October 2024

<sup>151</sup> Saudi Arabia Foreign Ministry, [X \(Twitter\)](#), 26 October 2024 [accessed 31 October 2024]

<sup>152</sup> Saudi Arabia Foreign Ministry, [X \(Twitter\)](#), 28 October 2024 [accessed 31 October 2024]

<sup>153</sup> [Global condemnation mounts against Israeli strikes on Iran as Western nations remain silent](#), Tehran Times, 26 October 2024

<sup>154</sup> [Iraq files complaint over Israel's use of its airspace to attack Iran](#), Tehran Times, 28 October 2024

<sup>155</sup> International Crisis Group, [The future of Iranian-Saudi détente](#), 13 June 2024; European Council on Foreign Relations, [Europe's stake in the Saudi-Iran détente](#), 30 September 2024

The House of Commons Library is a research and information service based in the UK Parliament. Our impartial analysis, statistical research and resources help MPs and their staff scrutinise legislation, develop policy, and support constituents.

Our published material is available to everyone on [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk).

Get our latest research delivered straight to your inbox. Subscribe at [commonslibrary.parliament.uk/subscribe](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/subscribe) or scan the code below:



 [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk)

 [@commonslibrary](https://twitter.com/commonslibrary)