

Between war and war

Israel urges the US to attack, the Arab Gulf states vacillate

by Karin Leukefeld,* Beirut



Karin Leukefeld
(Picture ma)

For the sixth time in a year, Israeli Prime Minister *Benjamin Netanyahu* has travelled to Washington to dissuade US President *Donald Trump* from reaching a diplomatic agreement with Iran on its nuclear programme. The hasty day

trip did not produce the result Netanyahu had hoped for, according to the internet platform "Al Monitor", quoting the US President after the nearly three-hour meeting between the two.

Talks with Iran would continue, Trump subsequently stated on his social media blog. He said that "nothing final has been decided except that I insisted that negotiations with Iran continue". He wanted to see whether "a deal can be concluded or not". If not, "we'll just have to see what the outcome will be".

The media were not allowed to attend the meeting between Netanyahu and Trump; apparently, a broad agreement of silence had been reached. Similar behaviour by the two politicians had also been observed after a meeting in April 2025, at which Trump and Netanyahu presumably made arrangements for the attack in June 2025.

The conclusion, according to "Al Monitor", is that there is a rift between Israel and the US on the issue of Iran. Trump clearly prefers a "deal" with Iran to military confrontation. Israel, on the other hand, is "concerned" that the US administration is focusing solely on Iran's nuclear pro-



Against all rights, the people of Iran are being held hostage to a Great Power policy based on military and economic force. Café at the entrance to the Vakil Bazaar in Shiraz.

(Picture hr)

gramme and ignoring Iran's ballistic missile programme and its cooperation with "regional proxies" such as Hamas (occupied Palestinian territories), Hezbollah (Lebanon) and the Houthis (Yemen), according to "Al Monitor".

In view of the ongoing tensions, the *European Aviation Safety Agency* has warned all airlines against flying into Iranian airspace. Weeks ago, the German Armed Forces withdrew German soldiers from Erbil in Kurdish northern Iraq and relocated them to Jordan. German soldiers are involved in a "training mission" there.

Military build-up against Iran

Militarily, the US is continuing its naval build-up against Iran. Israel is also continuing to prepare for a military escalation. Israel and the US have conducted a joint missile defence exercise, according to the Israeli Ministry of Defence. The "David Sling" missile defence system was tested during the exercise. This system was a "lifeline" during the twelve-day war against Iran in June.

Israel had attacked Iran unprovoked on 13 June 2025 and bombed its nuclear facilities. Nuclear physicists and military personnel, a total of more than 1,000 people, were killed and 2 million people were displaced. The USA – with which Iran had been negotiating for weeks – was involved in the attacks and ultimately sent a squadron of B2 bombers across the oceans to attack Iran with the heaviest bombs available.

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Iran responded with attacks on Israel, which led to widespread destruction, but the Israeli army remained silent about this. The largest US base in the region, in Qatar, was also bombed.

Iran is once again showing itself willing to negotiate on its nuclear programme, but not on its ballistic missile arsenal, which it says is for defensive purposes. Its cooperation with regional actors, which are designated as “terrorist organisations” by the US and the “rules-based” West as well as Israel, and which are sanctioned, bombed and defamed in the media, is also not up for discussion.

The Arab Gulf states

Oman is mediating in the bilateral talks between Washington and Tehran. In Qatar, Iranian Foreign Minister *Abbas Aragchi* was given the opportunity to outline Iran’s position and perspective on the situation in the Gulf region in his opening speech at the 17th *Al Jazeera Forum* on 7 February. He focused his speech on Palestine, regional balance and the multipolar world. Palestine is not just a humanitarian or regional issue, Aragchi said, but rather “the cornerstone of sustainable security in West Asia and an important benchmark for the international community’s compliance with the principles of international law.” Based on international law, a credible political perspective must be developed to realise the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination.

The Israeli occupation must end and the right of return for Palestinian refugees must be implemented. A Palestinian state must be independent and united, with Jerusalem as its capital – these are the fundamental pillars of any just and sustainable solution for Palestine.

Aragchi called for an international arms embargo, targeted sanctions and an end to impunity against Israel. The Islamic Arab states and the countries of the Global South should coordinate their efforts to “effectively support” the rights of the Palestinian people. Lasting stability can only be achieved through justice, and perpetrators must be held accountable. Impunity must end and “the expansionist policies of the Zionist regime” must be opposed.

Intensive diplomacy by Iran and the Arab Gulf states followed this appearance by the Iranian foreign minister in Qatar. In Doha, Aragchi met with the Qatari foreign minister and prime minister, who in turn conferred with the Turkish for-

eign minister. A few days later – almost parallel to Benjamin Netanyahu’s short trip to Washington – Iran’s top security official, *Ali Larjani*, travelled to Oman, where he met with the spokesman of the Yemeni Houthis. In Qatar, Larjani met with Hamas as well as with the Emir of Qatar. The latter spoke on the phone with US President Donald Trump.

Behind the scenes, the Arab Gulf states had lobbied Trump intensively not to give in to Israel’s pressure for a new attack on Iran. The Saudi defence minister travelled to Washington. For its part, Iran had repeatedly made it clear that US facilities in the region, in the Arab Gulf states, would be “legitimate targets” for Iran in the event of a joint or coordinated attack by Israel and the US.

The Iranian Shah from the US

Meanwhile, the son of the former Shah, *Reza Pahlevi*, called on US President Donald Trump to provide military support for the “liberation of Iran”. In an interview with the German magazine “Der Spiegel”, Pahlevi explained that such military intervention would not be “external intervention, but humanitarian intervention”. Trump had the chance to “make history” by helping the Iranian people achieve freedom.

It is unclear how much support the former Shah’s son, who lives in the US, has among the more than 90 million Iranians. Just a few days ago, millions of Iranians took to the streets of Iranian cities to mark the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. In a televised address, Supreme Leader *Ali Khamenei* thanked the Iranian people for their widespread participation in the nationwide marches.

Israel’s preferred aid organisations

Meanwhile, facts are being created in Gaza. More than 30 aid organisations, some of which have been working for Palestinian refugees since 1948, are no longer being granted permission by Israel to continue their work. They – including the organisation *Doctors Without Borders* – have refused to comply with a new Israeli order requiring them to report all data on their Palestinian employees to the Israeli military. Israel has meanwhile approved new organisations that differ from the previous aid organisations primarily in their civil-military orientation.

The internet portal *The New Humanitarian* (TNH) describes in a report its months-long in-

investigation of these organisations and concludes that they have “downplayed or avoided talking about” Israel’s military actions, even though a UN commission of inquiry, human rights organisations worldwide and legal experts have described Israel’s actions as “genocide”. Leading employees of several of these organisations were “photographed at militarised food distribution points run by the *Gaza Humanitarian Foundation* (GHF), where more than 1,100 Palestinians were killed last year by Israeli forces and US security companies,” according to the TNH report.

One of the new organisations worked as a partner of the GHF, while another donated equipment to the Israeli military and illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Several of the organisations also collaborated with the Israeli authorities in south-western Syria, where Israeli occupation forces have been stationed since the end of 2024. Leading representatives of several of these organisations also denied, like the Israeli government, that there was a famine in Gaza, even though international institutions had confirmed this.

Attack against independent UN expert

Palestinian journalists, Israeli government critics and UN rapporteurs have contributed significantly to the review and analysis of Israeli actions against Palestinians in Gaza in accordance with international agreements, the UN Charter and international law. The UN *Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, *Francesca Albanese*, was and remains one of the most outspoken voices calling attention to the situation in Gaza. For this, she was penalised with sanctions by US President Donald Trump and banned from speaking at once-renowned universities in Munich and Berlin, Germany. Now the foreign minis-

ters of Germany and France, *Johann Wadephul* and *Jean-Noël Barrot*, have called for the legal expert to be removed from her post.

The reason for this is a contribution by Francesca Albanese at the Doha conference of the Qatari news channel “Al Jazeera”, where she once again denounced the cooperation of states and institutions with Israel. This “system of complicity”, which for two years has supplied Israel with money and weapons and publicly supported it, is “a common enemy” that has made the genocide in Gaza possible. It is a “common enemy” for all those who do not have large financial resources and do not have access to algorithms and weapons.

Barrot and Wadephul accused Francesca Albanese of “anti-Semitism”, saying that her statements were directed against Israel and the Israelis and were outrageous, the two ministers explained. Francesca Albanese had “justified” 7 October 2023 and “compared Israel to the Third Reich”, according to Barrot. She was “a political activist spreading hate speech that harmed the Palestinian cause”. The campaign against Francesca Albanese is being driven by MPs and the media in both France and Germany.

The office of UN rapporteur is affiliated with the UN Human Rights Council. The experts, who are elected by the Council for two-year terms, review the living conditions of people worldwide based on the rights to which they are entitled under the UN Charter and UN agreements. They are not subordinate to UN officials or any foreign minister; they represent the rights of the populations whose living conditions they investigate. The Palestinians have been deprived of their rights by Israel since its founding in 1948.

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