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Iran's unprecedented attack against Israel, the need for de-escalation and an EU response

European Parliament resolution of 25 April 2024 on Iran's unprecedented attack against Israel, the need for de-escalation and an EU response (2024/2704(RSP))

(C/2025/3712)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the UN Secretary-General's statement of 13 April 2024 regarding attacks by the Islamic Republic of Iran targeting Israel,

— having regard to the G7 Leaders' statement of 14 April 2024 on Iran's attack against Israel,

— having regard to the statement by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on behalf of the EU of 14 April 2024 on Iran,

— having regard to the statement of 3 April 2024 by the Spokesperson of the European External Action Service (EEAS) on the attack in Damascus,

— having regard to Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/1532 of 20 July 2023 concerning restrictive measures in view of Iran's military support to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine ([1]),

— having regard to the EU terrorist list and Council Common Position 2001/931/CFSP laying down the criteria for listing persons, groups and entities ([2]),

— having regard to the European Council conclusions of 17 April 2024,

— having regard to the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly,

— having regard to international humanitarian law, in particular the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols,

— having regard to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961,

— having regard to the EU statement to the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of 12 September 2023 on verification and monitoring in Iran in light of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015),

— having regard to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1970,

— having regard to Rules 132(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas on 13 April 2024, Iran attacked Israeli territory for the first time, firing over 300 drones and missiles; whereas most were intercepted by Israel, the US, the UK and France, who also provided aerial reconnaissance and defence from Jordanian soil; whereas five missiles still impacted Israeli territory, hitting the Nevatim Israeli Air Force Base and seriously injuring a seven-year-old girl from Israel's Arab Bedouin community; whereas all 170 drones and 30 cruise missiles were intercepted before entering Israeli territory, while 105 out of 110 ballistic missiles were intercepted by Israel's missile defence systems; whereas preceding and during the attack, Hezbollah also launched rockets towards the Golan Heights and the Houthis attacked Israeli territory;

B. whereas on 1 April 2024, Iran's consulate in Damascus, Syria was bombed in an air strike widely attributed to Israel that killed seven officers, including two senior Iranian generals from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and injured 13 others; whereas Iran's consulate in Damascus has been reportedly used to stage 150 attacks on American and Israeli targets in the region; whereas following the bombing, Iran called for 'punishment and revenge'; whereas the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and on Consular Relations grant protection to diplomatic premises; whereas all UN Security Council members expressed concerns and called for de-escalation; whereas US officials confirmed that, during the night of 19 April 2024, Israel carried out some retaliatory military operations with drone attacks in the central province of Isfahan;

([1]) OJ L 186, 25.7.2023, p. 20.
([2]) OJ L 344, 28.12.2001, p. 93.

C. whereas the EU, the UK, the US and others have unanimously condemned the attacks and called on both sides to de-escalate;

D. whereas Hamas's despicable terrorist attacks in Israel on 7 October 2023, during which its operatives brutally killed mostly civilians, abducted 253 people as hostages and took them to the Gaza Strip, with 112 of them having since been released, has had profound and detrimental effects on the stability of the entire Middle East; whereas Israel's subsequent war against the Hamas terrorists in the Gaza Strip has entailed a disproportionate military response that has killed tens of thousands of civilians, including many humanitarian workers and journalists, and caused a catastrophic humanitarian situation, including unprecedented levels of famine, due to the population's lack of safe, unhindered access to humanitarian aid; whereas the events since 7 October 2023 have had profound and detrimental effects on the stability of the entire Middle East;

E. whereas in the occupied Palestinian territories, Iran has been supporting the terrorist organisation Hamas financially and logistically;

F. whereas hundreds of rockets and air strikes launched by Hezbollah and its allies and Israel have hit southern Lebanon and northern Israel since 7 October 2023, displacing 60 000 Israelis and 30 000 Lebanese; whereas Israel's air strikes in Lebanon have targeted Hezbollah and Hamas members;

G. whereas Iran has brought militias from Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan to Syria to quell dissent and control the Syrian regime's territory; whereas since 7 October 2023, Iran-backed militias in Syria have stepped up the firing of drones and rockets at Israel;

H. whereas Iran's ally in Syria, the Assad regime, besieged, shelled and starved Yarmouk Camp, the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Syria, between 2011 and 2015, killing hundreds of civilians and displacing over 200 000 Palestinian refugees;

I. whereas in Iraq, Iranian-backed militias have exerted nefarious political and military influence, acting outside the control of national defence authorities; whereas they have specifically targeted US military bases, as well as the Iraqi Kurdistan region; whereas a pro-Iranian militia in Iraq claimed responsibility for the strikes on 1 April 2024 against an Israeli naval base in Eilat;

J. whereas in Yemen, Iran provides substantial support and is closely linked to the Houthi movement; whereas the Houthis' attacks have targeted international commercial shipping in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait since October 2023, heavily disrupting maritime traffic in the Red Sea and threatening global economic stability; whereas they have been holding Japan's *Galaxy Leader* vessel and its crew, including three EU nationals, hostage since 19 November 2023; whereas the US and its European allies have intercepted Houthi drone attacks; whereas EU Naval Force Operation ASPIDES was created in February 2024 to protect international maritime passage; whereas the UN-led peace process in Yemen has been stalled since October 2023; whereas previous Iranian attacks, such as the seizure of the *MSC Aries*, a Portuguese-flagged container ship with an Estonian crew on board, in the Strait of Hormuz, pose a danger to international maritime security;

K. whereas Iran's nuclear programme has consistently breached the terms of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), by exceeding the limit on its uranium stockpile, elevating enrichment activities to 60 %, resuming JCPOA-restricted operations at nuclear facilities and effectively obstructing IAEA oversight; whereas on 13 September 2023, France, Germany, the UK and the US expressed grave concerns about these developments to the IAEA Board of Governors; whereas Iran warned Israel that it could review its nuclear doctrine following speculation that Israel would target Iran's nuclear facilities;

L. whereas Iran has provided significant military assistance, including by constructing a drone factory in Russia and delivering several thousand drones (unmanned aerial vehicles), (artillery) ammunition and surface-to-surface ballistic missiles, to support Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine; whereas these weapons have been used indiscriminately against Ukraine's population and civilian infrastructure; whereas on 20 July 2023, the European Council established a new framework for restrictive measures targeting Iranian military assistance to Russia;

M. whereas human rights defenders, peaceful protesters, journalists, artists, the LGBTIQ community, unionists and sports champions have suffered under Iran's brutal domestic and transnational repression, including on EU soil, particularly opponents to the Iranian regime, such as former European Parliament Vice-President Alejo Vidal-Quadras, who was shot, presumably by the IRGC; whereas thousands of political prisoners are currently being held in horrendous detention conditions, many on death row; whereas Iran is one of the world's top offenders with regard to capital punishment, as it executed at least 853 people in 2023, according to Amnesty International; whereas ethnic, religious and sexual minorities in Iran continue to face violent repression;

N. whereas the issue of gender apartheid in Iran has been raised by UN special rapporteurs; whereas since September 2022 and the killing of Jina Mahsa Amini, historical protests for women's rights have taken place in Iran; whereas the 2023 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought was awarded to Jina Mahsa Amini and Iran's 'Woman, Life, Freedom' movement; whereas the Iranian regime has responded with an even harsher legal environment, further restricting women's clothing and expanding gender segregation;

O. whereas the US designated the IRGC a foreign terrorist organisation in April 2019; whereas the European Parliament has been requesting that the IRGC be added to the EU terrorist list since early 2023; whereas the IRGC have been implicated in the planning and/or execution of dozens of operations, assassinations and terrorist attacks on EU soil over the past 30 years, including the 'Mykonos Plot' in Berlin in 1992, the bus bombing and killing of five Israeli citizens and one Bulgarian national in Bulgaria in 2012, the murder of Iranian dissidents in the Netherlands in 2015 and 2017, a planned bomb attack on Iranian dissidents in Paris in 2018, a planned assassination of three Iranian dissidents in Denmark in 2018 and an attempted arson attack against a synagogue in Bochum, Germany in 2022; whereas some EU foreign affairs ministers made a request for sanctions against the IRGC during the Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 16 April 2024;

P. whereas an estimated two dozen innocent EU nationals have been arbitrarily detained as part of Iran's hostage diplomacy to extort political wins; whereas Iran has abducted dissidents outside of its own territory in order to detain or execute them in Iran;

Q. whereas, in response to the sanctions imposed on Iran by the EU, Iran has taken retaliatory measures against Members of the European Parliament (MEPs); whereas in response, in November 2022, Parliament decided that its delegations and committees will no longer engage with Iranian authorities;

R. whereas on 17 April 2024, the Council decided to expand its sanctions regime against Iran to include Iran's missile and drone production; whereas the US administration has imposed new sanctions on Iran's ballistic missile and drone programmes;

S. whereas despite support among part of the Iranian population being displayed by state media, the attacks by the Iranian regime have been heavily criticised by many Iranians within and outside the country; whereas measures were allegedly taken to suppress dissenting voices from expressing criticism following the attack; whereas the Iranian regime does not legitimately represent the people of Iran;

1. Condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the unprecedented drone and missile attack carried out by Iran on Israel on the night of 13 to 14 April 2024, as well as the serious escalation and threat to regional security that this represents; reiterates its full support for the security of the State of Israel and its citizens; conveys its sympathy to the family of the victim from Israel's Arab Bedouin community, a seven-year-old girl who was seriously injured by shrapnel; condemns the simultaneous attacks perpetrated by Iran's proxies, namely Hezbollah in the Golan Heights and the Houthi movement off the coast of Yemen;

2. Deplores the attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus on 1 April 2024, which resulted in several casualties; recalls the importance of the principle of the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises, which must be respected in all cases under international law;

3. Calls on all parties to avoid any further escalation and calls for maximum restraint and de-escalation;

4. Welcomes the EU's decision to expand and broaden the current sanctions regime established in July 2023, including by sanctioning Iran's supply and production of unmanned drones and missiles to Russia and the wider Middle Eastern region; demands that these sanctions be urgently put in place; calls for more individuals and entities to be sanctioned, such as the Baithe Rahbari (Office of the Supreme Leader of Iran), the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Khatam-al Anbiya Central Headquarters and its commander Gholam Ali Rashid, the IRGC's navy, Iran's Defence Minister Brigadier General Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani, and Director of Iran's Aerospace Industries Organisation Seid Nooshin; notes that the current EU sanctions only include six individuals and five entities responsible for Iran's nuclear programme; underlines that these sanctions will need to be prolonged after July 2024; calls on the Council to prepare additional sanctions in the banking, oil and aviation sectors to be imposed in the event that the Iranian regime unacceptably escalates the situation further, and to communicate these preparatory measures in advance to the Iranian authorities; urges the Council to evaluate the latest US sanctions on Iran and consider the added value of synchronising the EU and US sanctions regimes wherever relevant and possible; underlines that these abovementioned sanctions should be coordinated with the US, the UK, the G7 and other allies to the extent possible;

5. Reiterates its long standing call for the Council and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) to add the IRGC to the EU list of terrorist organisations and stresses that this decision is long overdue; highlights the fact that there have been dozens of IRGC assassinations and attempts on European soil in the past few years;

6. Highlights the strong links among Iran/the IRGC, its proxies such as the Houthis, Iraqi and Syrian militias and organisations on the EU terrorist list, namely Hamas and Hezbollah's military wing; calls on the Council and the VP/HR to add Hezbollah in its entirety to the EU list of terrorist organisations; condemns Iran's export of drones and ammunition to support Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine;

7. Is highly concerned by the spiralling escalation in the region and the destabilising role that the Iranian regime and its network of non-state actors play in the Middle East; is alarmed by the severe risk of a widening regional escalation; condemns all acts by state and non-state actors that provoke or feed an intensifying escalatory cycle; urges all parties to de-escalate and to refrain from the threat or use of force in line with their international obligations, in particular under Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, and to exercise the utmost restraint; urges all actors to fully respect and uphold international law and international humanitarian law at all times;

8. Calls on the VP/HR and the Member States to continue and step up their diplomatic efforts with international partners, including with the Gulf countries, building on recent initiatives and in particular on the first EU-Gulf Cooperation Council High-Level Forum at ministerial level held on 22 April 2024, and to encourage urgent de-escalation and meaningful dialogue;

9. Highlights the profound effects of the war in the Gaza Strip on the stability of the region; deplores the terrorism and war crimes committed by Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups against Israel and against the Israeli and Palestinian people; calls for all Israeli hostages held in the Gaza Strip to be immediately and unconditionally released and for the International Committee of the Red Cross to be given immediate access to all Israeli hostages being held in the Gaza Strip, so that it can provide them with medical care; underlines Israel's obligation to comply with international law when exercising its right to self-defence, as enshrined in the UN Charter; condemns the disproportionate Israeli military response, which has caused a civilian death toll of unprecedented scale; urges Israel to provide the Gaza Strip's starving population with full, unhindered and safe access to humanitarian aid and to comply with orders from the International Court of Justice; highlights that finding a long-lasting political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would significantly improve the region's stability and prospects; reiterates its unwavering support for a negotiated two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 lines with two sovereign, democratic states living side by side in peace and guaranteed security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states, and in full respect of international law;

10. Notes that Iran, Russia and China have been increasingly sharing critical intelligence and cooperating through front companies, efforts to link their banking systems and oil transfers at sea with location devices turned off, making EU sanctions less effective; calls for improved enforcement of EU sanctions, for an urgent upgrade of automatic identification systems to counter sanctions and embargo evasion, and for increased surveillance and inspections of suspected Iranian ships;

11. Condemns Iran's persistent non-compliance with its legal safeguard obligations under the JCPOA and the advancement of its nuclear programme beyond all credible civilian justification; stresses that multiple credible sources have stated that Iran's current 'breakout time' – the time Iran needs to produce sufficient weapons-grade plutonium – is a matter of weeks; urges the Iranian authorities to immediately abide by their obligations and address all related outstanding issues; urges the E3 (France, Germany, the UK) and its partners to consider imposing a deadline on Iran to comply with its obligations under the JCPOA and, in the event of non-compliance, to invoke collectively the snapback sanctions mechanism under UN Security Council Resolution 2231;

12. whereas the US is incredibly concerned about the military cooperation between Iran and North Korea, in particular on nuclear and ballistic missiles; whereas there are also legitimate concerns regarding Iran's military cooperation with Russia and Pakistan, and its enhanced cooperation with China on military technology; whereas the UN Security Council has reported on the exchange of long-range missile technologies and weaponry between North Korea and Iran, which have also been delivered to Iran's proxies in the Middle East; whereas North Korea has supplied Iran with critical missile components, enabling the development of ballistic missiles that are capable of striking targets much further away, in effect, helping Iran turn into a missile powerhouse;

13. Recalls that Hezbollah must disarm in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1701; condemns its active role in repressing opposition voices within Lebanon and Syria, including through its assassination of several whistleblowers who reported on the explosion of the port of Beirut in August 2020; condemns Hezbollah's attacks against Israel and Israeli air strikes in Lebanon; urgently calls on both parties to show restraint and cease hostilities so as not to further escalate tensions; calls on the Council to designate Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organisation;

14. Urges the EU and its Member States to consolidate and intensify all efforts to ensure the secure and immediate release of all hostages taken from the *Galaxy Leader* vessel, including two Bulgarian, one Romanian and three Ukrainian citizens, who have been held by the Houthis since 19 November 2023; urges the VP/HR and the Member States to step up their diplomatic outreach to this end and engage with all relevant stakeholders in order to guarantee the safe return of the captured Europeans without further delay; strongly condemns the unlawful interception, boarding and detention of the Portuguese-flagged vessel *MSC Aries*, along with its crew, by entities operating under the direct or indirect control of the Iranian Government; urgently requests their immediate release; welcomes the EU Council's decision to launch the EU Naval Force Operation ASPIDES to safeguard freedom of navigation off the coast of Yemen, in close cooperation with regional actors;

15. Condemns Iran's hostage diplomacy; demands the immediate and unconditional release of Johan Floderus, a Swedish citizen and EU official who was arbitrarily detained in Tehran and who remains imprisoned in Iran under inhumane conditions; urges the EU to launch a strategy to counter it with a dedicated task force to better assist detainees' families and effectively prevent further hostage-taking; calls for all non-essential travel by EU citizens to Iran to be discouraged; calls on Iran to immediately and unconditionally release all EU nationals, including the European External Action Service official Johan Floderus, as well as all other political prisoners;

16. Condemns the sanctions imposed by the Iranian authorities against MEPs; reaffirms that as long as these sanctions on European parliamentarians persist, interparliamentary dialogue must remain suspended;

17. Calls on the Commission to launch a broad strategy to address transnational repression by the Iranian regime in the EU and considers that the strategy should promote technical tools to prevent such repression; calls for sanctions against the family members of prominent IRGC members who study or work in the EU and for measures to prevent any harassment or intimidation of the Iranian diaspora in the EU, including on campuses; calls on the European intelligence services, CSIRTs, the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre, the EU Agency for Cybersecurity and the East StratCom Task Force to actively cooperate in countering and deterring online Iranian / IRGC / Iranian Ministry of Intelligence disinformation and cyber and intimidation operations directed against the Iranian diaspora; calls on the EU Member States to actively counter Iran's attempts to spread its revolutionary ideology on EU soil;

18. Calls for the EU and the Member States to provide cybersecurity support and free and accessible virtual private networks (VPNs) or other circumvention tools to civil society and the opposition in Iran;

19. Condemns the massive nationwide crackdowns by the Iranian authorities on women who violate the outrageous hijab law; notes with grave concern the recent escalation in the use of the death penalty in Iran and reiterates its call for its abolition;

20. Expresses its full support and solidarity with Iran's civil society and democratic forces; calls for the EU and its Member States to increase support for human rights defenders who need to leave Iran, including through rapid access to visas and asylum, and to provide technical support to those helping Iranian civil society, while ensuring Iranian ownership of these activities;

21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Government and Parliament of Iran and the Government and Parliament of Israel.