

# *Israel and Iran trade further strikes as hostilities extend into fifth day*

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Smoke billows up from the site of an Iranian rocket strike in Herzliya, Israel [Menahem Kahana/AFP]

Concerns grow that the conflict could spark a wider regional war.

Tehran, June 17 (RHC)-- Israel has carried out strikes across Iran while Tehran returned fire with missiles as the foes traded attacks for a fifth straight day with the region anxiously bracing for a potentially wider and ruinous conflict.

The ongoing violence on Tuesday came after United States President Donald Trump struck an ominous note, calling for the immediate evacuation of Tehran. Concerns that the US could spark a wider regional war should it enter direct conflict with Iran continue to build.

The Israeli military reported early on Tuesday that it carried out "several extensive strikes" on what it said were missile sites and other military targets in western Iran, striking dozens of missile and drone facilities.

Iranian media reported that loud explosions were heard in the northwestern city of Tabriz, home to an air force base that Israel has repeatedly targeted since it launched a surprise assault on Iran's military and nuclear facilities on Friday.

Three people were killed and four injured in strikes on the central city of Kashan, Iran's state-run Nour News reported.

A residential building was struck in Tehran, and three people were rescued from the rubble, the reports added.

Israel's military said Iran had also fired more missiles, reporting that its forces were working to intercept them.

Explosions were heard over Tel Aviv and Jerusalem among other areas. Images showed plumes of dark smoke rising from the site of a strike in Herzliya as emergency services were deployed at the scene.

Israel's national emergency service said 10 people were injured while running to shelters after air raid sirens sounded in Tel Aviv.

Al Jazeera's Nour Odeh, reporting from Amman, said the Israeli military censor has forbidden the publication of images and information about Herzliya, classifying it as "sensitive".

"That usually means that it's either a military, intelligence or strategic asset or site that the Israeli military censor does not want to disclose," Odeh said. She added that Iran's IRGC said in a recent statement that they targeted the "intelligence buildings in Herzliya, the Mossad and the Israeli (Aman) military intelligence, so that claim remains unanswered from the Israeli side".

Amid the strikes, the Israeli military claimed that it had assassinated another senior Iranian military official. General Ali Shadmani was killed in a strike by the Israeli air force in central Tehran through the use of precise intelligence, the military said, describing him as Iran's wartime chief of staff, "senior-most military official" and the closest military adviser to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Shadmani was reportedly appointed to his new post after Israel assassinated the former commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, Gholam Ali Rashid, on Friday.

Iran did not immediately comment on the claim, which came days after Israel assassinated a slew of Iran's top generals as well as nuclear scientists.

Trump warns: "Evacuate Tehran immediately!"

The attacks unfolded in the face of growing calls internationally for the bitter foes to de-escalate.

However, Trump, who left the Group of Seven summit in Canada on Monday, one day early, due to the situation in the Middle East, appears to be increasingly backing Israel, issuing ominous messages.

In a post on social media overnight, he warned that “everyone should evacuate Tehran immediately,” lamenting the “waste of human life” in the conflict and reiterating that Iran could not be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon.

He denied his exit from the G7 was to arrange a ceasefire. “Publicity seeking President Emmanuel Macron, of France, mistakenly said that I left the G7 Summit, in Canada, to go back to D.C. to work on a ‘cease fire’ between Israel and Iran,” he wrote.

“Wrong! He has no idea why I am now on my way to Washington, but it certainly has nothing to do with a Cease Fire. Much bigger than that.”

Macron had said, in light of Trump’s early departure from the summit, that talks were under way and stated that an offer for a ceasefire had been made, but he did not specify by whom.

In a statement agreed at the summit before Trump’s departure, G7 leaders described Iran as “the principal source of regional instability and terror” -- adding that Israel “has a right to defend itself.”

Israel said its attacks are necessary to prevent its longtime adversary from getting any closer to building a nuclear weapon. Iran has retaliated by launching hundreds of missiles and drones at Israel.

[ SOURCE: PRESS TV and NEWS AGENCIES ]

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