From the editorial team of FokusIsrael.ch

1. How has the situation in the Middle East changed after the Israeli and U.S. strikes on Iran?

The successful strikes by Israel and, most recently, the United States against Iran—especially against its program to develop nuclear weapons—have fundamentally altered the situation in the Middle East. And this holds regardless of whether Iran's nuclear program has been destroyed permanently or only set back for years.

After the substantial neutralization and weakening of Hamas and Hezbollah, Israel—backed by the United States—has now also significantly weakened the mastermind behind these militant groups: the regime in Tehran. On one hand, critical uranium-enrichment and weapons-production facilities were put out of action and more than half of Iran's ballistic missile launchers were destroyed. On the other hand, key figures in the nuclear program, the Iranian military, and the Revolutionary Guards were eliminated.

Whether this defeat of the government and its two military arms—the regular army and the Revolutionary Guards—will lead to an uprising depends on the Iranian people themselves.

What is clear, however, is that the world has become safer because of this war. This is particularly true for Israel itself, but also for other states in the region: the Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt.

The United States and Europe—and therefore Switzerland—also benefit from the Israeli strike. An Iranian nuclear bomb (which experts estimated could have been only days to weeks away) would have posed a threat to all of us. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz was therefore justified in saying: "Israel is doing the dirty work for us."

Lebanon is also among the beneficiaries of the Israeli-American action. After Israel's devastating strikes against Hezbollah in recent months, the recent operations represent a further weakening of this Iran-funded, heavily armed, and trained terrorist organization. This strengthens the current Lebanese government's efforts to disarm Hezbollah.

2. How likely is a quick end to the war in Gaza?

The success against Iran is likely to have positive effects on Gaza and on Israel's domestic political situation. We can expect a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas within the next two weeks, for several reasons:

Public pressure in Israel for an end to the fighting and the immediate return of the remaining 50 hostages—of whom 20 are believed to still be alive—is growing louder.

The leadership of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has made clear to the government that continuing operations would greatly endanger the remaining living hostages.

U.S. President Donald Trump wants the Gaza war ended quickly for reasons of prestige.

Hamas is severely weakened and can no longer count on strong support from Iran, which itself is weakened after the 12-day conflict.

Benjamin Netanyahu can now afford a ceasefire with Hamas because his political standing at home has been strengthened by the victory over Iran; he is less dependent on his far-right partners than he has been for a long time. (Recent polls forecast a strong result for his Likud party in new elections, in contrast to its right-wing coalition partners.)

3. What are the three most common claims made by Israel's critics regarding the Iran war?

Claim 1: "It is not proven that Iran wanted to build a nuclear bomb."

This is a politically motivated and dishonest claim. It is proven that Iran enriched uranium in a manner consistent only with weaponization. It is also proven that Iran misled the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), denying it full access to its nuclear facilities. And it is proven that Iran tried to construct many of its facilities to be bomb-resistant. Why would Iran have taken those steps if it did not intend to build nuclear weapons?

Claim 2: "The Israeli and U.S. strikes did not sustainably weaken Iran's nuclear program."

It is true that the public currently lacks a precise picture of the full extent of the damage caused by Israeli airstrikes and the subsequent U.S. attack on Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. It is also questionable whether we will ever know the full details.

However, there are several indications that the damage is significant. For example, prior to the U.S. strike on Fordow, the NZZ wrote that disabling that facility would require two so-called “super bombs.” In fact, the Americans dropped 14 GBU-57A bombs on Fordow.

The claim—contradicted by Israel and the U.S.—that Iran was able to move its highly enriched uranium to safe locations before the Fordow strike is also doubtful.

Moreover, Israel had earlier eliminated the entire scientific leadership of Iran’s nuclear weapons program. Last but not least, Israel has taken out a large portion of Iran’s missile launchers and missile-production facilities.

In short: we can assume that Iran will not be an imminent nuclear threat for the foreseeable future.

Claim 3: “Israel’s strike was illegal under international law.”

This assertion has been made by various international-law scholars and others (for example, the former Swiss ambassador to Iran, Tim Guldimann). They argue that “preemptive strikes” are very narrowly permitted under international law—only if it is proven that an attack was planned within the next 14 days.

This view overlooks the historical, political, and military facts of the conflict between Iran and Israel.

Since Ayatollah Khomeini’s rise to power in 1979, Iran has repeatedly and openly declared the destruction of Israel and the Jews as one of its primary objectives. That amounts to a declaration of war.

But Iran has not only “declared” war on Israel; it has been waging it for a long time. It created the terrorist militias Hezbollah and Hamas (the Houthis are less relevant in this context). It did not merely found them; it financed, armed, trained them, and—relevant to international law—exerted direct control over their leadership and dispatched Revolutionary Guard officers to them.

Therefore, it is incorrect to label Israel's June 13 strike as an unlawful "preemptive" attack. What happened on June 13 was prevention against the construction of an Iranian nuclear weapon, but legally it was a response within the context of a war that Iran has been waging against the Jewish state for more than 45 years.

Urs Saxer, professor of international law at the University of Zurich, also points out that Israel's strike on Iran's nuclear and missile program must be assessed not only for its "legality" but also for its "legitimacy." It is obvious that a state threatened with annihilation has the legitimacy to prevent that annihilation.

One more observation about the "international law" debate: none of the experts and politicians who accuse Israel of violating international law for striking Iran seem bothered that Iran attacked Israeli civilians with rockets and drones for days—even in April 2024. Those attacks are undeniably violations of international law, yet they have not been criticized—certainly not by the UN or the International Criminal Court, which would be expected to do so.

4. What are the most common claims made by Israel's critics regarding Gaza?

In the Gaza war, critics make a range of false and routinely delegitimizing claims about Israel.

Claim 1: "Israel is committing genocide in Gaza."

Anyone who claims this either does not understand what "genocide" means or does not know how the IDF operates in Gaza. The IDF's actions are not aimed at the civilian population. This is demonstrated by the fact that before every strike the IDF warns civilians in the affected area via leaflets, SMS, and loudspeaker calls to leave the combat zone. Who would do that if they intended to commit genocide?

Claim 2: "Israel's attacks on civilian facilities violate international law."

It is true that over the past 600-plus days the IDF has repeatedly struck schools, hospitals, or residential buildings. But that occurred only when fighters from Hamas or Islamic Jihad were hiding there—which has since been proven by numerous photos, videos, and statements. In such cases, international law (Article 52, Protocol I of 1977 to the Geneva Conventions) permits attacks on civilian facilities that are being used for military purposes.

Claim 3: "Preventing aid deliveries to Gaza violates international law."

The blanket accusation that Israel's prevention of aid shipments to Gaza violates international law is also false. The Geneva Conventions and their protocols are clear: if such assistance can be used by the opposing side for military advantage, it may be restricted (Article 23, Fourth Geneva Convention, 1949).

This is precisely what happened in Gaza. When the UN and UN-associated NGOs were still bringing aid into Gaza, those deliveries were often seized by Hamas and then sold to the population to finance its fight against Israel. There is a large amount of video and photographic evidence to this effect, and the Wall Street Journal documented it in a detailed article.

For that reason, in May Israel and the U.S. set up an alternative distribution program through the Geneva-based Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). The GHF now reports distributing 2.3 million meals daily. It has hired private security forces, and the Israeli army secures distribution centers extensively.

Media reports have repeatedly mentioned shootings and deaths during GHF distributions. The GHF disputes these claims and says fatalities occurred at UN distribution points (which still exist). The Associated Press confirmed this in a report.

Nevertheless, Israel has been criticized by the UN, the EU, and Switzerland for not allowing sufficient aid into Gaza. Given Hamas's diversion of aid intended for the population during UN and other distributions, these appeals are questionable. Not once have the European politicians who criticize Israel over aid pledges said: "We—the French, the British, the Spanish, the Germans, the Swiss—are prepared to send our troops to Gaza to ensure that aid reaches civilians and cannot be stolen by Hamas."