

Arab countries at **UN slam** Iran's retaliatory strikes

China said the US-Israeli attack "brutally violates Iranian people's human rights"



A smoke plume billowing in Dubai after a projectile strike. Residents of Dubai were aghast as hundreds of drones and missiles targeted the United Arab Emirates and the US' other Gulf allies, long-time refugees from regional conflict



Smoke billowing following an explosion from the port of Bandar Abbas along the strait of Hormuz.

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

Arab countries yesterday slammed Iran's wave of retaliatory strikes across the Middle East, decrying at the United Nations that Tehran had upended their attempts to avoid a regional escalation.

After the United States and Israel began striking Iran on Saturday, Tehran launched a wave of reprisal attacks at targets across the Middle East.

The Group of Arab States told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva that Iran's attacks were an "extremely grave" violation of international law that threatened regional stability.

"The Arab countries were seeking to bolster dialogue and openness. The is an unjustifiable escalation that destabilises all peace and stability efforts," Saudi ambassador Abdulmohsen Binkhothaila said, speaking for the group.

The six Gulf Cooperation Council countries -- Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates -- plus Jordan -- all hit

Putin urges ceasefire in Middle East in calls with Gulf leaders

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Russian President Vladimir Putin urged a ceasefire in the Middle East during phone calls with the leaders of several Gulf states yesterday as the war triggered by US and Israeli strikes on Iran spreads throughout the region.

Retaliatory strikes from Tehran have hit targets across the Gulf, forcing authorities to close airspace and stalling traffic at big hubs such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Putin on Monday held calls with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as well as with the leaders of the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain.

In a call with Emirati President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, both leaders "emphasised the need for an immedi-

ate ceasefire and a return to the political and diplomatic process", the Kremlin said in a readout.

The Russian leader also said he was ready to convey the UAE's concerns about Iranian retaliation strikes to Tehran and to help stabilise the situation in the region.

During the call with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, both leaders shared concerns about "the risks of the conflict's expansion and the danger of third countries being drawn into it," the Kremlin said.

The Russian foreign ministry earlier slammed "any attacks on civilian targets, whether in Iran or Arab countries," in the con-

flict. Facing isolation from the West after sending troops to Ukraine, Putin has sought to strengthen partnerships in the Middle East, maintaining close relations both with Iran and the Gulf monarchies.

The UAE has emerged as a key mediator in the four-year-long Russia-Ukraine war, brokering a number of prisoner exchanges between the two sides and most recently hosting talks between US, Russian and Ukrainian officials on a US-drafted plan to end the fighting.



by Tehran's retaliation -- also jointly condemned the "Iranian aggressions", which came "despite our efforts to avoid escalation in the region".

On Thursday, Oman had mediated talks in Geneva between US and Iranian negotiators. Washington and Israel launched their attack two days

later. "We call for the immediate cessation of military actions... and return to dialogue because it's the only way to solve dis-

agreements," said the sultanate's deputy permanent representative Mohamed Al-Balushi.

Kuwait's ambassador Naser Abdullah H. M. Alhayan added: "Terrorising the civilians in countries seeking peace is an abhorrent crime.

"Iran should resort to self-restraint and... wisdom and refrain from further military escalation," he said.

'Raw power'

Iran's ambassador Ali Bahreini said his country was "under indiscriminate and invasive military attacks by the United States and the regime of Israel".

He said Iran's schools had been bombed, hospitals indiscriminately attacked, its leaders assassinated and "more than 160 innocent schoolgirls were massacred in Minab".

"The deliberate killing of civilians" openly violates the UN Charter, he said, and the "ongoing, unlawful military aggression against Iran exemplifies the dominance of raw power over the principles of human rights".

The European Union urged maximum restraint, while the African group said the situa-

tion was eroding trust among nations.

Iran's neighbour Turkey warned: "There is no ambiguity about the gravity of the moment. We stand at a precipice.

"The danger of further escalation is real and immediate," said ambassador Burak Akcapar, urging countries to prevent a "widening spiral of instability that could extend well beyond Iran and our region".

Some countries voiced support for Iran at the UN's top rights body.

China said the US-Israeli attack "brutally violates Iranian people's human rights" and the killing of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini "seriously violates Iran's sovereignty".

Cuba said Washington was proclaiming the "exceptional right to conquer and to use force as a legitimate form of behaviour".

Venezuela -- citing the US capture of president Nicolas Maduro -- said immunity for heads of state must be respected, otherwise others could be targeted with "unlawful bombing, abduction or assassination".

Italy says evacuating hundreds of citizens from UAE

● 2,500 Italian troops deployed in the Gulf region

AFP | Rome, Italy

Italy said yesterday it was helping evacuate hundreds of citizens from the United Arab Emirates, estimating there are currently around 30,000 Italian nationals in the country.

Considering a request from Gulf allies for "air defence and anti-drone protection"

Speaking in the Italian Senate, Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said a group of 98 Italians had left the UAE for Oman on Sunday and were due to arrive in Rome later on Monday.

Another group of around 200 Italian students who had been stranded in Dubai are due to be evacuated on a UAE flight to Milan on Tuesday.

The United States and Israel

launched a war against Iran on Saturday, prompting retaliatory missile and drone attacks by Tehran against US allies in the Gulf region. Thousands of travellers in the region have been left stranded because of airspace and airports closures, although Dubai said it would resume "limited" flights on Monday.

"We are creating corridors and networks of embassies to

facilitate the movement of Italians to countries where there are flights available," Tajani said.

He said Italy would help with charter flights to bring back thousands of Italians who were due to transit through Dubai on their way back from the Maldives.

Tajani said there were "a bit less than 500 Italians" currently living in Iran and plans were in

place for them to be evacuated through the border with Azerbaijan if needed.

"In case the situation worsens, we are ready to organise a convoy within a few hours. On the ground on the Azerbaijani side of the border, the bases are already ready," he said.

Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto told the same hearing that there were 2,500 Italian

troops deployed in the Gulf region and none had been injured.

He also said Italy was considering a request from Gulf allies for help with "air defence and anti-drone protection".

Crosetto was himself stranded in Dubai, where he had been with his family on private visit, when the first strikes began on Saturday. He was flown out on Sunday from Oman with an Italian military plane, paying for the trip himself following criticism from opposition politicians.