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Israel and Middle East News Update

Tuesday, June 24

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Headlines:

- Trump announces Israel-Iran ceasefire
- Qatar mediated between Israel and Iran to reach ceasefire, source tells 'Post'
- Iran retaliates, fires missiles at US bases in Qatar, Iraq
- IAEA chief expects 'very significant damage' at Iran's Fordo site, demands access
- US Vice President Vance says Iran is now incapable of building a nuclear weapon - Fox
- In Tehran, IDF strikes IRGC sites, gate of Evin Prison, 'Destruction of Israel' clock
- Succession plans for Iran's Khamenei hit top gear
- Germany's Merz sees no reason to criticize Israeli, US attacks on Iran
- Iran threatens Trump with domestic terror attacks
- Iranian parliament committee approves general plan to suspend cooperation with IAEA, news agency reports
- Putin hosts Iran's FM as Tehran strikes US bases

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Reuters

Trump announces Israel-Iran ceasefire

U.S. President Donald Trump said that a "complete and total" ceasefire between Israel and Iran will go into force with a view to ending the conflict between the two nations, moments after both sides threatened new attacks. Trump appeared to suggest that Israel and Iran would have some time to complete any missions that are underway, at which point the ceasefire would begin in a staged process.

Jerusalem Post

Qatar mediated between Israel and Iran to reach ceasefire, source tells 'Post'

Qatar was involved in mediation between Israel and Iran to achieve a ceasefire announced by US President Donald Trump on Monday night, a diplomatic source told The Jerusalem Post. In a Truth Social post, Trump wrote that a ceasefire has been reached between Jerusalem and Tehran and will enter into effect in the span of 24 hours. Trump said that Iran will immediately cease attacks and Israel will join the ceasefire on the 12th hour of the agreement. On the 24th hour, both sides will reportedly accept an end to the 12-day war.

Al-Monitor

Iran retaliates, fires missiles at US bases in Qatar, Iraq

Iran retaliated on Monday for US strikes on Sunday that targeted three of its nuclear sites, firing 14 missiles at American bases in Qatar and Iraq, per the White House. An Israeli defense official confirmed earlier to Al-Monitor that Iran had launched at least 10 missiles toward US bases in Qatar and one toward Iraq. Qatar hosts the largest US military presence in the Middle East, with more than 8,000 troops stationed at Al Udeid Air Base outside the capital, Doha. The US military also maintains a presence at Ain Al Asad Air Base in Iraq's Anbar province.

Times of Israel

IAEA chief expects 'very significant damage' at Iran's Fordo site, demands access

US bombing probably caused "very significant" damage to the underground areas of Iran's Fordo uranium enrichment plant dug into a mountain, though no one can yet tell the extent, UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi said on Monday. He further called for International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors to be able to return to Iran's nuclear sites in a bid to "account for" its highly enriched uranium stockpiles.

Reuters

US Vice President Vance says Iran is now incapable of building a nuclear weapon - Fox

U.S. Vice President JD Vance said on Monday Iran was no longer able to build a nuclear weapon after U.S. strikes destroyed its infrastructure. "Iran was very close to having a nuclear weapon," Vance said in an interview on Fox News' "Special Report with Bret Baier." "Now Iran is incapable of building a nuclear weapon with the equipment they have because we destroyed it," Vance said.

Times of Israel

In Tehran, IDF strikes IRGC sites, gate of Evin Prison, 'Destruction of Israel' clock

Israeli airstrikes targeted key assets and symbols of the Iranian regime in Tehran on Monday, including facilities belonging to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the notorious Evin Prison for political prisoners, and the "Destruction of Israel" countdown clock. The Israel Defense Forces said Israeli Air Force fighter jets struck headquarters and other facilities belonging to Iran's internal security forces and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Tehran. "These forces are composed of various corps and commands and are responsible, on behalf of the Iranian regime's military, for homeland defense, suppressing threats, and maintaining regime stability," the IDF said.

Reuters

Succession plans for Iran's Khamenei hit top gear

The clock's ticking for senior clerics seeking a successor to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. A three-man committee from a top clerical body, appointed by Khamenei himself two years ago to identify his replacement, has accelerated its planning in recent days since Israel attacked Iran and threatened to assassinate the veteran leader, five insiders with knowledge of the discussions told Reuters.

Jerusalem Post

Germany's Merz sees no reason to criticize Israeli, US attacks on Iran

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on Monday that there was no reason for him to criticize attacks by Israel and the United States on Iran. "There is no

reason for us, or for me personally, to criticize what Israel started a week ago, nor is there any reason to criticize what America did last weekend," Merz said at an event organized by the BDI German industrial lobby group. "Yes, it is not without risk, but leaving it as it was wasn't an option either," he added.

i24 News

Iran threatens Trump with domestic terror attacks

Iran has reportedly threatened to activate sleeper terrorist cells within U.S. territory if President Donald Trump orders a military strike against the Islamic Republic, according to an NBC News report on Monday. The threat was allegedly delivered through a mediator during last week's G7 summit, which Trump abruptly left after just one day. The report cites two U.S. officials and a source familiar with the matter.

Reuters

Iranian parliament committee approves general plan to suspend cooperation with IAEA, news agency reports

The national security committee of Iran's parliament approved the general outline of a bill meant to fully suspend Tehran's cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog, semi-official Tasnim news agency reported on, citing committee spokesperson Ebrahim Rezaei. Rezaei said that according to the bill, installing surveillance cameras, allowing inspections, and submitting reports to the IAEA would be suspended as long as the security of nuclear facilities is not guaranteed. Parliament still has to approve the bill in a plenary.

Al-Monitor

Putin hosts Iran's FM as Tehran strikes US bases

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Monday that his country was making efforts to provide help for the Iranian people hours before Iran launched missile strikes on US bases in Qatar and Iraq in retaliation for the United States bombing Iranian nuclear sites early on Sunday. Putin hosted Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Moscow as the Iranian strikes were launched. The Russian leader did not specify the nature of the help that would be provided. “We have long-standing, good and reliable relations with Iran. On our part, we are making efforts to help the Iranian people,” Putin said during a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Moscow, though he did not reveal the nature of the help that would be provided.

Commentary:

Times of Israel

The silence after the sirens

By Raoul Wootliff

- It begins the same way every time. The sirens scream, and for a moment, everything becomes clear. I stiffen. The country stiffens. Fear is metabolized into purpose. Left, right, religious, secular – we become one body, one voice, one story. We are strong. We are together. We are under attack. And in that moment, I feel something else too: calm. Because the siren is not only a warning, it is a balm. It silences the noise inside my head. It reduces the unbearable complexity of this moment to one simple, pure imperative: survive.
- I have come to crave that kind of clarity. Because when the sirens stop, a quiet prevails. And in that silence, my voice is not always welcome. For the past twenty months, since that long black Shabbat of October 7, I’ve lived with a growing sense of internal exile. Not because I’ve given up on Israel, but because I haven’t. Because I believe that better days are ahead.
- And because I ask what the plan is to get there, where it leads, and whether the people leading us are up to the task. And that, in today’s Israel, is an act of quiet rebellion. What does it mean to live under

constant war and still believe, despite everything, that military power alone is not a plan? That leadership must be accountable? That morality cannot be optional? That real clarity is earned, not declared?

- It means learning to live in a shrinking mental space. It means carrying questions like contraband: What are we actually trying to achieve in Gaza? What does victory over Iran mean? What is our strategy? What is our end goal?
- But these questions don't land. They hover, then vanish. Because no one wants to hear them. Not now. Not while soldiers are in the field and pilots in the air. Not while rockets fall. Not while Tehran waits.
- So I calibrate my words. I post carefully. I smile and say "yes, hopefully soon," when someone says, "We'll finish the job." And maybe I even believe it, for a moment. Because this is a country that needs certainty the way lungs need air. And amid the heavy fog of war, uncertainty becomes indulgent. Complexity, a subversion. If you're not optimistic, you're ungrateful. And if you ask what comes next, you are, at best, a nuisance – and at worst, a traitor.
- Yet I understand the feeling. We all want to feel clean, strong, vindicated. We want to believe we are the heroes in a story that still makes sense. That we are moving toward something noble. That history will understand.
- And so, I wait for the sirens. Not for what they warn, but for what they wipe clean. Their sound is an absolution. A single, piercing note of purpose. No nuance. No ambiguity. No past, no future. Just now. Just them and us. Just clarity.
- And I've learned: clarity feels good. Clarity is strength. Clarity is safety. Gaza is subdued. Iran is sobered. Our deterrence restored. Our enemies afraid. Our leaders in control. Our people united. History, surely, will vindicate us. Until the sirens end.

Jerusalem Post

Why Israel's war with Iran has international significance

By Efraim Inbar

- The US has joined the successful Israeli air campaign against Iran's nuclear and long-range missile infrastructure by bombing the installations at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. While the war is not over, its significance in the international arena is visible already.

- The US has been the beneficiary of Operation Rising Lion. The general perception is that Washington allowed Israel, its ally, to carry out a military campaign against Iran, which has challenged American dominance for several decades, with incessant calls for “Death to America.”
- The US provided Israel with arms and a diplomatic shield. Washington initially participated in Israel’s air defense against Iranian missiles and armed UAVs, sending at a later stage its B-2s to complete the destruction of key Iranian installations. Israel’s feats weakened an anti-Western actor and strengthened the American position in the world.
- Indeed, President Donald Trump decided to capitalize on the Israeli successes, showing that America is great again. The airstrikes on Iran – a member of the anti-American axis – reflect badly on China and Russia, Iran’s allies. Beijing and Moscow refrained from intervening, leaving Iran alone to carry the brunt of the assault.
- If the regime collapses, doubts about Russia’s and China’s reliability as a strategic partner will increase, particularly in the Third World. Moreover, in such a scenario, Russia’s decades-long investment in the country will go down the drain, while China will lose a friendly state in the Middle East and a source of cheap energy.
- Iran’s nuclear project also challenged the NPT regime, which has been a constant American foreign policy goal. Tehran enriched uranium, coming close to weapons-grade material, and worked covertly on weaponization. The IAEA, which swallowed Iranian lies for decades, finally found Iran in violation of its NPT commitments.
- The destruction of the Iranian nuclear infrastructure and the decapitation of the nuclear scientific personnel by Israel strengthens the NPT regime and dissuades potential proliferators in the Middle East from trying to emulate Iran, such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, or Egypt.
- The American bombing – the first time the US used force in a counterproliferation mode – serves as a potent warning. A nuclear Iran could have elicited similar ambitions in Central Asia and destabilized the nuclear balance in the Indian subcontinent and even the Chinese nuclear posture.
- This time, the American support and Iran’s genocidal intentions led to less criticism of Israel, particularly by democratic states, than its previous preventive strikes in Iraq (1981) and in Syria (2007) against emerging nuclear threats. In 2025, the US issued a green light, the G7 supported Israel’s right to self-defense, and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz praised Israel for doing the “dirty work for us” in Iran.

- We can detect a change in the international legitimacy awarded to military action to prevent proliferation, which could affect the calculus of would be proliferators. After all, it is difficult to hide a nuclear weapon program or make it invulnerable to preventive attacks, which receive greater legitimacy.
- This new tendency is at the expense of the blind belief in the supremacy of diplomacy and the widespread aversion to war. Of course, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 contributed to the awakening on the part of the West and to its reassessment of the utility of using military force. Iran's current predicament further weakens the anti-American Shi'ite Crescent (King Abdullah's expression) – a process started by Israel after the Hamas October 2023 attacks. This affects regions beyond the Middle East, as Iran's tentacles established dormant terrorist rings in Shi'ite diasporas in Latin and North America, as well as in Western Europe.
- Yet, the defeats of Iran and its proxies create a vacuum that seems to be filled by the rise of a new radical Sunni axis embodied in a Qatar-backed Turkey. This is a dangerous development. Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and much of his coterie are a Turkish incarnation of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), a radical anti-Western movement. Islamic fervor is mixed with longing for Ottoman grandeur.
- Turkey's military is the second largest in NATO, and Turks are ready to fight. Erdogan-led Turkey also has nuclear ambitions. The US has traditionally seen Turkey as an important ally, while Trump views Erdogan as a strong leader and friend, overlooking Turkish actions and excesses that deviate from American preferences.
- Turkey's capabilities and ambitions are enhanced by the financial largesse of Qatar, which is a long-standing backer of Muslim Brotherhood activities worldwide. It is the principal global propagandist of Islamism through its media powerhouse, Al Jazeera.
- In contrast to Iran, Qatar benefits from Washington's incredible blindness to its support for Islamic terrorists and anti-Western endeavors. Ironically, American current dispositions toward Qatar and Turkey are facilitating the emergence of the anti-American Sunni radical group.
- The decline in Iranian power does not herald a new, more peaceful Middle East, which remains a conflict-ridden region. Moreover, many states have a weak central authority unable to prevent the existence of armed militias. The Middle East will continue to be a source of Islamist terrorism and violent crises. Use of force still is part and parcel of the rules of the game for all Middle Eastern actors.

- **The importance of airpower (expensive and labor intensive) versus a much cheaper missile-based force has been a subject of debate in many strategic fora around the world. The Israeli air campaign in Iran clearly shows the advantages of an effective air force. Missiles are important on the battlefield but are no substitute for manned or unmanned aircraft.**
- **With the spread of missile technology and the greater danger of destruction from far away, Israel's enormous investment in building adequate anti-missile defense systems was a lesson for threatened states. Similarly, the need for passive defensive measures and proper education of the population for missile attacks was proven.**
- **The US, under Trump, has signaled that it is a great power still involved in international affairs. As for Israel, its audacious attack on Iran eliminated an existential threat and restored its deterrence that was greatly eroded by the October 7 events. Moreover, Israel has kept its monopoly over nuclear weapons in the Middle East.**