

## Summary

Iran's missile and drone attack on Israel on April 14 very likely constitutes a dangerous escalation in a growing conflict between Israel and Iran. The attack came in retaliation to an Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) airstrike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus on April 1, which killed 16 people, including 7 senior Iranian army officers. Israel has vowed to respond, and it is highly likely that the IDF will target with increased intensity members of Iran's and Syria's military, as well as Pro-Iran militias in Syria, particularly in Damascus and in its rural countryside. Staff could become victims of collateral damage in case of IDF strikes.

### Recent events and developments

In the early hours of April 14, Iran launched hundreds of drones, ballistic and cruise missiles towards Israel, largely hitting Israeli military infrastructure. Despite the relatively low impact of the attack, in that only two IDF bases were damaged, and only one civilian was injured, Iranian authorities have underlined that their operation was completed, in that they had demonstrated their capacity to strike Israel. The attack itself came in retaliation to an Israeli airstrike on the Iranian consulate in the Mazzeh neighbourhood of Damascus on April 1. The strike killed 7 Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officers, 6 members of the Popular Resistance for the Liberation of the Golan (PRLG), and 2 civilians. On March 28, IDF warplanes targeted Hezbollah militants in Bahdaliyah, rural Damascus, which killed one militant and injured 5 others. On March 24, the IDF bombed the positions of Syrian regime forces and Pro-Iran militias in Jdaybat al-Shaybani, a rural town Northwest of Damascus, resulting in unknown casualties. On March 19 and 17, IDF airstrikes targeted Syrian army positions in the vicinity of the town of Yabrud, Northeast of Damascus, causing an unknown number of casualties. The April 14 attack marks yet another step in the quickly escalating confrontation between Iran and Israel, and their respective allies. On April 15, Israel's military chief said Israel would respond to the attack. Israel has also asked 32 nations to sanction Iran further, to limit their missile production capabilities. While several world leaders have asked Israel's government to avoid escalation, it remains very likely that Israel will retaliate to the April 14 missile and drone attack.

### Impact assessment

The Iranian drone and missile attack on Israel on April 14 very likely represents a form of new escalation between Israel and Iran, who have had a long-lasting enmity which became more inflamed than ever following Israel's offensive into Gaza in October 2023. The Syrian regime has strong ties to Iran, and Iranian-backed groups such as Hezbollah have a strong presence in the country. Additionally, there are numerous Iranian officials who are deployed in Syria to cooperate with and advise the Syrian regime and army. Aiming to counter the entrenchment of Iranian influence in Syria, the IDF has intensified its strikes against Iranian military officials and Iranian-backed groups, as seen on April 1. In response to the Iranian attack, it is highly likely that the IDF will strike Iranian-linked and Syrian regime targets with increased intensity. These strikes will most likely target Syrian military installations, and locations where Iranian-linked groups are located, most likely in and around Damascus, and in rural areas bordering the Golan Heights. Other large cities like Homs and Hama could also be targeted if the IDF identifies Iranian-linked targets. The IDF may further use different means to strike targets, such as artillery and drones, and may target higher-profile targets, such as Syrian army officers and/or senior Iranian officials. Conversely, the IDF may choose not to escalate further, and instead maintain the frequency of airstrikes seen prior to the April 14 attack. It is further highly unlikely that IDF troops will deploy to Syria, due to its high impact. Finally, as seen on April 1, IDF strikes could target civilian neighbourhoods and diplomatic premises, and as such, staff could become victims of collateral damage.

### Advice from Forth Global

- Advise staff traveling to Syria to undertake a several days long HEAT training prior to travel.
- Monitor local news and liaise with local partners to remain updated on developing events.
- Ensure that travel contingency plans are updated and delivered to all employees in Syria.
- Avoid expressing any and all personal opinions regarding the ongoing conflict, especially online.

### Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

+31 (0) 35 543 04 37  
[christiaan@forthglobal.com](mailto:christiaan@forthglobal.com)

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