

Opinion | If Iran Attacks Israel, the Blame Lies on Israel's Irresponsible Decision-makers

Sunday 14 April 2024, by [LEVY Gideon](#) (Date first published: 14 April 2024).

Gen. Mohammad Reza Zahedi was killed April 1 in a strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus. Two weeks later, Israel is anxiously bracing for what's next. Judging by the U.S. warning, the Iranian attack is already making its way here, and it could even arrive in the hours between the writing of these lines and their publication.

Anti-Israel posters in Tehran, Iran, seen on Saturday.Credit: AFP

After a few days of the usual marveling over the [amazing targeted-killing capabilities demonstrated in the Syrian capital](#) – what brilliant intelligence forces, what precise weapons – the time to pay the price is approaching, and the cost this time may be unbearably heavy. In any case, it will exceed the value of the killing, which may have been justified but, like all of Israel's targeted killings, was unnecessary, pointless and, this time, probably also dangerous.

[Zahedi was a military man](#); his elimination, like all of Israel's targeted killings, was meant to send a message of deterrence and to reduce the military capabilities of the other side – Iran, in this case. Is there even a single officer in the Israeli military whose killing would significantly affect Israel's military capabilities? There is not, and there never will be.

A poster in Tehran showing Israeli military leaders in crosshairs after an Israeli-attributed strike killed Iranian generals in Damascus, earlier this month.Credit: Majid Asgarpour/ REUTERS

Why is it that we always tend to believe that in Hamas, Hezbollah or Iran are officers whose elimination would improve our national security? Israel killed Zahedi because the opportunity to kill him arose. And when that kind of opportunity knocks, no one in the top brass ever resists the sweet temptation to execute another brilliant James Bond mission. What will happen afterward?

The fact that nothing has ever happened before is good enough for us. We have never paid a price for these killings. For several years now, Israel has provoked Iran constantly, in Lebanon, Syria and also on Iranian soil, and has not paid any price. It would be foolish to believe that the rope Israel has stretched will not break. That moment may have come.

Even such a measured and [sober military analyst as Amos Harel wrote in Haaretz Friday](#) that the killing of Zahedi and that of members of Ismail Haniyeh's family in Gaza on April 10 were carried out without sufficient consideration of the consequences. Harel reported that the relevant Israeli officials apparently did not discuss the implications of the acts at all. It takes an insane amount of arrogance to think that Iran will never react to these provocations.

The car that was carrying Haniyeh's sons and grandchildren after being bombed, Wednesday.Credit: AFP

Anyone who embarks on such a dangerous adventure as killing a Quds Force commander in Lebanon, without first debating the consequences, is a dangerous and irresponsible person for whose actions we will all pay the price. Harel says the assassination in Damascus was carried out following pressure from the military. The political leadership, which approved the operation – Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to be explicit – bears all the responsibility and the blame for the results, of course.

This must said, loud and clear: If a war with Iran is ignited this week, or if Iran launches a serious attack on Israel, the responsibility will lie with those who approved the assassination in Damascus.

This is already the second targeted killing of Iranians since the war in Gaza began. Where Iran is concerned, there are no questions of morality or justice, only of wisdom. To provoke Iran at this time – while the Israel Defense Forces is slogging away and bleeding in Gaza, Israel's border with Lebanon is burning and the West Bank is threatening to do so as well – is a dangerous act that cannot be ignored.

Smoke rises after what the Iranian media said was an Israeli strike on a building close to the Iranian embassy in Damascus, Syria, earlier this month.Credit: Firas Makdesi/Reuters

It was clear on the day of the strike in Damascus, while Israelis were winking at each other and drooling over the reports. It is doubly clear now, on the verge of an Iranian attack. It's hard to believe that even after it Israel will begin to demonstrate restraint and reason: The Israeli counterattack will follow immediately and there we are, at war with the most dangerous and powerful enemy Israel has ever faced.

Is this what the masterminds, the people who issued the orders, the people who carried out the assassination in Damascus wanted? Is this what we Israelis want? Is this really what we need right now, war with Iran?

Just don't say, again, that there was no choice. There was a choice: not to kill. Even if it is deserved, even if it is permitted and even if it is possible. The person who sent the assassins put Israel at risk of war with Iran.

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P.S.

• Haaretz. Apr 14, 2024 12:45 am IDT :
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