

Top Iran general says destroying Israel 'achievable goal'

Tehran (AFP) – The commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards said Monday that destroying arch-rival Israel has become an "achievable goal" thanks to his country's technological advances.

"This sinister regime must be wiped off the map and this is no longer... a dream (but) it is an achievable goal," Major General Hossein Salami said, quoted by the Guards' Sepah news site.

Four decades on from Iran's Islamic revolution, "we have managed to obtain the capacity to destroy the imposter Zionist regime", he said.

Salami's comments, while not unusual for Iranian officials, come amid particularly heightened international tensions over Iran's nuclear program and a series of incidents that have raised fears of a confrontation between Tehran and its other main regional rival, Riyadh.

The United States, which withdrew from a landmark nuclear deal between Iran and world powers in 2018, has imposed a campaign of "maximum pressure" — with vocal support from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The comments by the commander of Iran's ideological army were given prominent coverage by the Tasnim and Fars news agencies, close to ultra-conservative political factions.

The official IRNA agency also carried his remarks but placed more emphasis on his assertion that Iran was growing stronger and would finally beat its foes despite "hostility" towards it.

In contrast, foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi in a tweet wished "Happy (Jewish) New Year to our Jewish compatriots and to all true followers of the great prophet Moses (PBUH)", an acronym for 'peace be upon him.'

Mousavi's greeting was written in Persian, English, and Hebrew.

Iran only has a few thousand Jews left compared to between 80,000 and 100,000

before its 1979 revolution.

The country has been consistently hostile towards Israel since its revolution, and Tehran openly supports anti-Israeli armed groups including Palestinian Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

- 'Cancerous tumor' -

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, an outspoken opponent of any rapprochement between Tehran and the West, has charged that "Iran calls for Israel's destruction and they work for its destruction each day, every day, relentlessly".

He welcomed his ally US President Donald Trump's decision in May 2018 to pull out of the landmark nuclear accord between Tehran and world powers, arguing the deal would "enable Iran to threaten Israel's survival".

Israel considers Iran its archfoe and has carried out hundreds of strikes in neighboring Syria against what it says are military targets of Iran and its Lebanese military ally Hezbollah.

It has vowed to keep Iran from entrenching itself militarily in the war-torn neighboring Arab state.

In June 2018, supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei reaffirmed Tehran's long-held position that Israel is "a malignant cancerous tumor that must be removed and eradicated".

But he has also said that Tehran has never called for the Jews to be "thrown into the sea", unlike Arab leaders such as the late president Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt.

Iranian generals routinely express the desire to destroy Israel or claim to be able to wipe out Tel Aviv.

However, official discourse in recent years has generally taken care to clarify that the Jewish state will cease to exist because of its own "arrogance", not because of an attack by Iran.

Source:

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