



What happens next in Iran-Israel conflict?

Jerusalem (AFP) – Israel's invasion of Lebanon this week and Iran's missile attack on its regional foe, all while war rages on in Gaza, have heightened the risk of a high-intensity conflict across the Middle East.

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The spiralling violence now threatens to engulf more and more of the region despite diplomatic efforts to calm tensions, with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres warning of a "sickening cycle of escalation after escalation".

AFP spoke to analysts to assess what could happen next:

[...]

With many Israelis celebrating the Jewish new year this week, the holidays may "not a good time to retaliate", said **Danny Citrinowicz, an Iran specialist at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)** in Tel Aviv. "But I don't think it will take much time," he said.

[...]

Iran has "already thought things through, to some extent at least. They are ready," said Citrinowicz, suggesting that Tehran's response to any Israeli retaliation would be "swift".

Sima Shine, another Iran expert at the INSS, said that the Islamic republic possessed "undeniable" destructive capabilities.

"They can launch more than 200, or even 300 missiles, and they also have drones," she said, while also warning about "terrorist operations abroad" that could include attacks on Israeli diplomatic missions or Jewish community centres.

"Everything right now hinges on Israel's response, whether it escalates into a regional war," said Sina Toossi, a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy in Washington.

Both Netanyahu and Iran were "taking huge gambles", he said.

[...]

Ultimately, Citrinowicz said, both Iran and Israel "will look for a political solution" that may be supported by the United States and France, whose influence particularly in Lebanon could play a critical role in restoring calm.

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