



An Israeli flag hanging over a billboard in Tehran in solidarity with the people of Israel (October 2023)

Iranians Reject Regime Sentiment On Hamas War

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Author: **Iran International Newsroom**

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While the Islamic Republic is cheering about the war in Israel, Iranians' reactions to the regime's propaganda indicate a complex societal schism.

Iranian media and social media platforms are awash with posts and discussions about the ongoing conflict, but some clips are more telling than others to grasp people's nuanced perspective on the war. The sentiments within Iran are far from uniform as the regime intensifies its rhetoric in support of the war, and people are tired of the hackneyed propaganda of the regime that aims to justify the atrocities.

While countless posts sympathetic to Israelis who have suffered the biggest loss of life in one day since the holocaust are promoting hashtags such as "Iranians Stand With Israel," the regime and its cyber minions are promoting their own narrative, reposting hashtags for Hamas' appellation of the attack: "Operation al-Aqsa Storm."

Several leading Iranian opposition figures such as exiled prince Reza Pahlavi have also spoken out in support of Israel, reiterating that the regime's narrative does not represent the feelings of ordinary Iranians.

A clip from an Iranian entertainment talk show has become viral on online spaces in the past few days, featuring a woman who passionately said if she had “two kilograms of explosives,” she would detonate Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Knowing that such statements are well rewarded by the authorities in Iran, another guest of the show took the floor saying that “it’s a waste to spend two kilograms of material on him.”

He added that a matchstick would suffice to burn him claiming that he burns fast because he is ‘najis’ – an Islamic term referring to something dirty that cannot be cleaned. In a gleefully abhorrent tone, the woman said he cannot be killed with a matchstick. Everybody in the show, which is by no means a serious political program, are smiling and having fun talking nonchalantly about killing the Israeli premier.

The regime has also erected large banners to advertise the attack in Tehran in several major cities, and has held large celebrations, distributing candies and drinks on streets for the attacks that have already killed around 900 Israeli civilians and soldiers, in an attempt to shape how the Iranians feel about the war.

However, another viral clip pictures the true feeling of Iranians about the regime's support for its proxy war. On Sunday, thousands of Iranian football fans chanted for the removal of Palestinian flags from the pitch during Tehran's popular club Persepolis match against Golgozar. Contrary to regime-sponsored events, in which slogans are provided by the regime propagandists, football fans in Iran expressed their thoughts uncensored and spontaneously. They could be heard shouting, **"Take that Palestinian flag and shove it up your A**!"**

Iranians are also using other slurs against the travesty that the regime tries to promulgate, calling the operational codename of Hamas attack “the al-Aqsa f**t” instead of storm.

It stands in stark contrast to the rest of the Arab world where street protests show people coming out in the masses to celebrate the Hamas operation. Scenes in countries such as Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon show the ongoing support for Palestine which has become one of the most sensitive issues in the Middle East.

Another clip that can shed light on the spirit of Iranians regarding Israel was from 2020 but has become viral again after the Saturday attack in which thousands of rockets rained down on Israel from 6am and dozens of armed militia troops invaded by land, sea and air. In the clip, crowds of people are seen outside Tehran’s Beheshti University refusing to trample over a giant Israeli flag that had been painted on the ground.

The Islamic Republic paints large US and Israeli flags at the entrance gates of schools, universities, garrisons and many other state buildings to force people to walk on them as a symbolic hate gesture. Walking on or burning these flags has been a feature of almost all regime-sponsored demonstrations. The refusal to step on the flags **was not a single incident** and has been captured in several videos of other gatherings.

Taken together, these clips and reactions paint a complex mosaic of Iranian sentiment towards the Israel-Hamas conflict. A significant portion of the population remains opposed to the narrative of the regime, which does not reflect the views of the Iranians.