

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*:

- Israel's efforts to spread war across the Middle East have sparked strong reactions in Ankara.
- Political and societal groups across Türkiye's political spectrum share a common perception of threat regarding Israel.
- The Prime Minister of Armenia is making an important visit to Türkiye.

Ankara's Response to the Israel–Iran Conflict

Israel's recent strikes on Iran represent a perilous escalation of its expansionist agenda—an agenda already evident in its genocidal war on Gaza and its repeated violations of Syrian sovereignty. This latest aggression underscores a deliberate pattern of regional destabilisation, as Tel Aviv extends its campaign of violence beyond Palestine's borders.

These moves suggest that Israel, emboldened by unconditional Western support, is attempting to spread regional instability and provoke wider conflict. As President Erdoğan warned, "Backed by the West, Israel attacks Iran, levels Gaza, and bullies every country in the region, yet it is unaware of the consequences of its actions. Perhaps one day it will realise its mistake, but by then, it may be too late."

Türkiye stands at the centre of a region fraught with escalating crises: a fragile Syria striving for stability, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war on the Black Sea frontier, and rising tensions between Israel and Iran. In this volatile environment, Türkiye remains committed to playing a responsible and stabilising role, championing diplomacy, supporting conflict resolution, and actively working to prevent further escalation.

In this context, President Erdoğan has engaged in intense diplomatic consultations, holding phone calls with U.S. President Trump, Russian President Putin, Iranian President Pezeshkian, as well as the leaders of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. These efforts reflect Ankara's determination to prevent a wider regional conflagration through active dialogue and strategic engagement.

Following Israel's latest attack on Iran, the Turkish government issued strong condemnations, denouncing Tel Aviv's aggressive attempts to export war across the region. Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli underscored the broader geopolitical implications, stating:



(Volkan Furuncu - Anadolu Agency)

"Israel's political and strategic aim is to encircle Anatolia and undermine the goal of a terror-free Türkiye on behalf of its masters." This assertion reflects growing concerns in Ankara about Israel's destabilising moves and the threat they pose not only to regional peace but to Türkiye's national security.

Türkiye's commitment to regional stability is evident in its support for order-building efforts in Syria and its ongoing efforts of the "Terror-Free Türkiye" initiative. These actions are not only vital for Türkiye's internal unity but also for the broader Middle East. In contrast, Israel's expansionist and bellicose posture continues to inflame tensions and obstruct peace. The current dynamics reveal a stark divergence in regional visions: Türkiye stands for peace and negotiated settlement, while Israel seems determined to fuel more conflicts. This clash of perspectives highlights a growing divide, not only between two states but also between competing visions for the region's future.

Reflections of the Israel–Iran Tension in Turkish Domestic Politics

The Israel-Iran confrontation has drawn significant attention also from the Turkish public, where there is a strong and growing sensitivity toward regional conflicts, particularly when they involve civilian suffering, as seen in Gaza. Many in Türkiye view Israel's actions not as isolated incidents but as part of a broader pattern of aggression aimed at destabilising the region. Public opinion largely perceives Iran's response as reactive, shaped by Israeli provocations and the broader geopolitical imbalance created by Western support for Tel Aviv. This has fuelled a narrative across much of Turkish society that sees Israel as the primary instigator of regional chaos.

Political reactions across Türkiye have also reflected this sentiment. The government has strongly condemned Israel's escalation, while opposition parties have generally aligned with the official tone, albeit with varying emphasis. The ruling AK Party has portrayed Israel's actions as a direct threat to regional peace and Türkiye's security environment. The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), a key government ally, has gone further, framing Israel's strategy as part of a broader

attempt to encircle Türkiye and undermine its sovereignty. Even opposition parties, such as the CHP and İYİ Party, have criticised the West's silence and called for de-escalation through diplomatic means. On the other hand, opposition parties representing Türkiye's conservative segments, such as the Saadet (Felicity), DEVA, and Gelecek (Future) Parties, have issued notably harsher statements in response to Israel's aggression.

In this context, a noteworthy demonstration was held in Istanbul under the leadership of the Saadet Party. The 'Free Palestine'-themed protest brought together representatives from the CHP, the Gelecek Party, and the İYİ (Good) Party, as well as participants from Hüda Par, a party closely aligned with the ruling bloc. There is a rare moment of unity in Turkish politics around the idea that the Middle East cannot afford another major war. In short, it is fair to say that across ideological lines in Türkiye, there is a strong sense of sensitivity regarding the Palestinian cause and heightened awareness of the threat posed by Israel.

Armenian Prime Minister Visits Türkiye

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's upcoming visit to Türkiye marks a significant moment in regional diplomacy, particularly in light of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. Azerbaijan's successful reclamation of territories, achieved with Türkiye's strong support, shifted the regional balance of power. Despite this, Armenia has shown a pragmatic shift in its foreign policy, choosing to engage with Türkiye and Azerbaijan rather than remain diplomatically isolated. Pashinyan's outreach reflects a broader effort to reposition Armenia in a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape.

Türkiye and Armenia have experienced a long period of estrangement rooted in complex historical grievances and the absence of diplomatic ties. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Pashinyan's presence at President Erdoğan's inauguration in 2023 was a powerful signal of Armenia's willingness to improve relations. For Türkiye, this outreach aligns with its regional vision of connectivity, stability, and economic integration. High-level contacts between the two nations continue despite political sensitivities and historical burdens that require careful management.

Pashinyan's visit also holds social and symbolic significance for Türkiye's Armenian community, whose members are part of the country's social fabric while bearing the memory of shared historical suffering. Türkiye recognises this history through a lens that emphasises mutual pain during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire while rejecting narratives it views as one-sided or politicised. Against this backdrop, a possible improvement in



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ties with Armenia may also foster greater understanding and dialogue between peoples alongside state-level diplomacy.

Beyond its political symbolism, Armenia's land border with Türkiye, which has remained closed since 1993, holds significant economic potential. Reopening the border would allow Armenia access to key regional trade routes, reduce its dependence on limited corridors, and create new economic opportunities for Eastern Türkiye as well. If trust can be built incrementally, both sides stand to benefit from restored transportation links, cross-border commerce, and cooperative infrastructure projects that could reshape the South Caucasus economically as well as politically.

Highlights

- The Central Bank, in its June statement, announced that it had kept the policy interest rate unchanged at 46%.
- The Turkish Defence Ministry denied reports that Israeli aircraft violated Turkish airspace while conducting airstrikes against Iran, calling such claims inaccurate.
- Turkish Defence Minister Yaşar Güler announced that Türkiye has increased security measures along its borders in response to recent developments in Iran, during an inspection visit to the eastern border region on Wednesday, June 18.

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