

## **Israel is again violating international norms and laws with repeated strikes against Syria.**

The missile strike at Syria's Latakia port on Tuesday is yet another reminder that the conflict in the Arab country is far from over. This is the second strike on Latakia, one of the busiest ports in Syria, within weeks, and Damascus has blamed Israel on both occasions. The Israeli authorities have neither confirmed nor rejected the accusations, but it is a fact that Israel has carried out air and missile attacks inside Syria in recent years.

After the strike on Latakia in early December, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said, "We are pushing back on the bad forces of the region day and night." The multi-faceted Syrian crisis has evolved over the years.

President Bashar al-Assad's regime, with help from Russia and Iran, has defeated most of the rebel groups and recaptured almost all lost territories, except Idlib. But Mr. Assad's apparent victory did not end the conflict. When Iran, which supplied men and weapons to Mr. Assad, built up its influence in the country, Israel, which has been occupying Syria's Golan Heights for decades, viewed it as a security threat. Russia, whose primary focus in Syria is on the survival of the Assad regime and the protection of its own troops and assets deployed there, has largely stayed away from the Iran-Israel cold war. This gives Israel a free hand in Syria to target the Iranian and Hezbollah shipments.

The Israeli approach, however, has two key problems. One, the repeated strikes are a flagrant violation of Syria's sovereignty. Israel, which has hardly upheld international norms and laws when it comes to its security policies, is setting another bad precedent. Second, Syria, devastated by the civil war, is emerging as a new front in the Israel-Iran tussle.

In recent years, Israel has reportedly carried out sabotage activities inside Iran and assassinated Iranian nuclear scientists. Iran, in return, has attacked Israel-linked vessels in the Gulf and Mediterranean waters and enhanced supplies to Shia rebel groups in the region.

The Latakia strike has come at a time when international powers are trying to revive the Iran nuclear deal, post-2018. If these attempts collapse and Iran presses ahead with its nuclear programme, the chances of an Israel-Iran military conflict will soar. Israel has already said that all options are on the table to "prevent" Iran from going nuclear.

So, Syria appears to a pawn in this game between the big powers of West Asia. Enfeebled by the civil war and dependent on Iran and Russia for survival, Damascus lacks the political will and resources to either check Iran's influence or deter Israel's attack. For Syria to see relative peace, there has to be a dial-down in tensions between Israel and Iran.

A good beginning point would be the revival of the nuclear deal.

### Expected Question (Prelims Exams)

**Q. In which country is the 'Latakia port' that came in the news recently?**

- (a) Syria
- (b) Jordan
- (c) Iraq
- (d) Iran

### Expected Question (Mains Exams)

**Q. Israel-Iran conflict is having direct and indirect impact on the entire Middle-East Asian region. So what are the options available to establish peace in this region? Discuss.**

**(250 Words)**

Committed To Excellence

**Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC main examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.**