When Will Washington's Assassination Spree be Universally Condemned?

The treacherous US assassination of a senior Iranian leader – General Kassem Suleimani, which violated all norms of international law provoked a storm across international media with pretty much everyone opposing this criminal act committed by Washington. A lot of criticism has also been voiced regarding the entire US foreign policy posture.

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations has described this assassination as an “act of war” committed against Tehran. The fact that Washington's move is a direct equivalent of launching a military campaign against Tehran has also been pointed out by German officials. In turn, Russia’s Foreign Ministry released a statement, where it was pointed out that when a UN member state eliminates officials of another UN member state on the territory of a third sovereign state, it constitutes a flagrant violation of the principles of international law, which deserves universal condemnation.

It is difficult to disagree with these remarks, since back in the 20th century an assassination of an official figure of one country by the armed forces of another state meant nothing less but a declaration of war, resulting in the parties involved becoming engaged in direct hostilities. The sitting US administration seems to be hoping that the 21st century allows much more leeway in interpreting such an “incident”, and a number of governments and international organizations that has been under direct control of the US seem not to have any problem with this position.

However, this act of war committed by the US failed to produce the results US President Donald Trump must have been seeking, namely the safeguarding of Washington’s positions in Iraq and Syria. Instead of strengthening the support the US used to enjoy in Iraq and the overall region, the former demonstrated a completely understandable reaction by voicing demands to immediately withdraw US troops from its territory. This wasn’t just a rejection of the devious assassination policies pursued by Washington, but a manifestation of fear that the entire country and the region as a whole may yet again be transformed into an arena for an all-out war.

Against this backdrop, we are now observing a rapid polarization of regional and of international political forces based on the growth of anti-American sentiments.

On January 5, Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani discussed the need to rally against the United States with his Turkish counterpart – Recep Tayyip Erdogan. In the opinion of the former, the absence of any response can lead to greater audacity, where the US may become inclined to take even more aggressive steps. It’s clear that he was alluding to the possibility of assassinations of other political figures opposing Washington.

On the very next day, the Turkish president commented on the US drone attack, describing it as a barbaric act that cannot go unanswered, while pointing out that Suleimani was at the very top of power in Iran. It’s no wonder that such a statement came from a Turkish official who can easily recall the unsuccessful military coup in Turkey on July 16, 2016, organized with the consent and approval of the United States, which forced the Turkish president into seeking closer ties with Russia and China. Out of all other politicians, Erdogan has a much better chance of imagining the US making a comparable attempt to take his own life one day.

The tensions between Turkey and the US have been particularly high recently, due to Ankara’s determination to purchase Russian S-400 anti-aircraft systems, together with its commitment to the joint construction of the TurkStream gas pipeline.

The assassination of the commander of an elite Iranian unit by the United States is almost universally condemned
Today, Moscow and Beijing regard this step as adventurous, as it can lead to an increase in tensions across the region. Iran has already made it clear that it will not consider US civilian objects for a retaliatory strike, however, the death of Suleimani has stirred up the entire Muslim world, and therefore it is absolutely impossible to predict who can decide to take revenge against the United States and where.

There’s been an active discussion of the role that Israel may have played in the assassination of Suleimani. It is noted that the decision to murder the high-profile Iranian general was preceded by a chain of events directly related to Washington’s attempts to defend Israel’s interests across the Middle East, often to the detriment of its own population. As it was stated by the former commander of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), it’s possible that Tel-Aviv handed over the intel regarding the location of Suleimani to Washington.

Upon realizing that the revenge for the assassination of the Iranian military leader could be taken against Israel, Israel’s Defense Minister Naftali Bennett convened a meeting with the heads of intelligence agencies after this incident, and Prime Minister Netanyahu interrupted his vacation in Athens to get home immediately. Israel realizes that Iran has no interest in fighting a war on its own territory or within the territory of neighbouring Iraq, while the United States is an ocean away from the Middle East. But there’s a much simpler and closer target for Tehran to go after - Israel. At the same time, Tel-Aviv must realize that the US wouldn't rush to its rescue in an event of an attack, as it became obvious after Washington’s verbal condemnation of the attacks that Yemeni rebels launched against Saudi oil refineries.

It’s clear that the situation is spinning out of control in the Middle East, with bellicose statements being voiced both in Tehran and Washington, followed by missiles landing in Iraq and a never-ending steam of anti-American demonstrations taking place in a number of countries across the globe.

A few days after the assassination of Suleimani, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Joseph Borrell urged Iran to exercise restraint and carefully consider any steps made in retaliation to avoid further escalation, which would harm the entire region and its people. The foreign ministers of the EU member states are planning to hold an emergency meeting to discuss the situation in Iran and Iraq, and evaluate the prospects of saving JCPOA on January 10.

On January 6, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg convened an urgent meeting of the North Atlantic Council to discuss the aggravation of the situation in the Middle East. Upon expressing, as was expected, his support for Washington’s actions, Stoltenberg nevertheless decided to distance himself and the Alliance from the steps Washington took to avoid the international condemnation, saying that the United States decided to murder Suleimani without ever consulting any of NATO’s member-states.

As it’s been announced by the UN Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial Executions, Agnes Callamard on social media:

> The targeted killings of Qasem Soleiman and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis are most likely unlawful and violate international human rights law: Outside the context of active hostilities, the use of drones or other means for targeted killing is almost never likely to be legal.

At the same time, a number of governments of the world have already expressed their dissatisfaction with the attempts that the UN has made to delay the inevitable discussion of Washington’s actions, as well as the fact that US authorities refused to provide a visa to Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who was planning to attend a UN Security Council meeting.

There’s an ever growing number of calls urging the international community to introduce international sanctions against the United States and its leaders, who act by the principle that “might makes right”, while ignoring international law and those organizations charged to uphold it. The assassination spree of the US must be stopped and stopped now, through the actions of the entire world, otherwise the entirety of human society will be destroyed by the leaders of the United States of America and those behind them, acting like mad men.

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