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## Iranian consulate in Damascus flattened in suspected Israeli air strike

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### DAMASCUS:

Iran's consulate in the Syrian capital Damascus was flattened on Monday in what Syrian and Iranian media described as an Israeli air strike, a startling apparent escalation of conflict in the Middle East that would pit Israel against Iran and its allies. A Lebanese security source, speaking to Reuters, said one of the dead was Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a senior commander in Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). Iranian state television said several Iranian diplomats had been killed. Reuters reporters at the scene in the Mezzeh district of the Syrian capital saw smoke rising from rubble of a building that had been flattened, and emergency vehicles parked outside. An Iranian flag hung from a pole in front of the debris. The Syrian and Iranian foreign ministers were both spotted at the scene.

Israel, which has repeatedly hit Iranian targets during the six-month war in Gaza, declined to comment on the incident, following its usual practice. An Israeli military spokesperson said: “We do not comment on reports in the foreign media.” Iran’s Tasnim news agency said five people were killed in the Israeli strike. Syria’s SANA state news agency reported an unspecified number of deaths and injuries. Since the Iranian-backed Palestinian faction Hamas’ attack on Israel on Oct. 7, Israel has ramped up airstrikes in Syria against Lebanon’s Hezbollah and Iran’s Guards, both of which support the government of President Bashar al-Assad.