

SBC leaders call for prayer, support for Israel after Iranian attacks

NASHVILLE (BP) – Southern Baptist leaders are calling for prayer and peace in the wake of Iran's direct attacks on Israel. The attacks occurred overnight Saturday Jerusalem time (April 13) as hundreds of drones and rockets were launched in retaliation for a strike Israel made April 1 against an Iranian consulate.

Israeli defense forces claim that 99 percent of the drones and rockets were destroyed by their Iron Dome defense system before impacting targets.

U.S. President Joe Biden condemned the attack "in the strongest possible terms."

"At my direction, to support the defense of Israel, the U.S. military moved aircraft and ballistic missile defense destroyers to the region over the course of the past week," Biden said. "Thanks to these deployments and the extraordinary skill of our servicemembers, we helped Israel take down nearly all of the incoming drones and missiles."

Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission President Brent Leatherwood said he is thankful for the defense of Israel but expressed frustration toward the Biden Administration.

"I have to ask what else is needed to stir Congress to action? An attack like this on one of our closest allies should motivate the Biden Administration and congressional leaders to work together to quickly pass a support package that ensures Israel has the resources necessary to fend off any future hostile actions," Leatherwood said in a statement to Baptist Press.

"Continuing to dither is not an option," Leatherwood said, "Now is the time to show the world that America will not stand idly by while our friends face down threats from terrorists and regimes bent on the destruction of innocent lives."

In a post Saturday night, SBC President Bart Barber reflected on the prayers lifted up for the peace of Jerusalem at the 2023 SBC Annual Meeting and the barrage of prayers offered since the Oct. 7 attacks.

"So, to those who suffer from Iranian violence and oppression through their proxy warriors in Hamas and Hezbollah, please understand this. Southern Baptists are praying for you. Southern Baptists are on your side. Southern Baptists support the defeat of these terrorists and the establishment of a just and lasting peace in Israel," Barber wrote.

"If you are worried that we who live far away from the conflict have stopped paying attention and have forgotten about you, I can assure you that we have not," he said.

Barber drew from Psalm 27 in his piece, "For he (God) will hide me in his shelter on the day of trouble; He will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock."

The United Nations Security Council called an emergency meeting on Sunday afternoon in New York to discuss Saturday's Iranian attacks and other recent attacks in the area.

On Sunday morning, U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson said on X, "I will continue to engage with the White House to insist upon a proper response. The Biden Administration's undermining of Israel and appeasement of Iran have contributed to these terrible developments."

Speaking on the importance of the American response, Dan Darling, said, "The reality is this: if the US Isn't strong in the world, other, less noble actors will fill the void."

Darling, director of the Land Center for Cultural Engagement at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary said, "American global leadership matters."

According to a Reuters report on Sunday, "Israeli officials said Netanyahu's five-member war cabinet favored retaliation...though the panel is divided over the timing and scale of any such response."

"President Biden told Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a call on Saturday (Apr. 13) that the U.S. won't support any Israeli counterattack against Iran," a senior White House official told Axios.

Leaders from the G7 issued a statement Sunday promising work to pursue peace in the region. The G7 is an informal partnership between Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as the European Union.

"We will continue to work to stabilize the situation and avoid further escalation. In this spirit, we demand that Iran and its proxies cease their attacks, and we stand ready to take further measures now and in response to further destabilizing initiatives," the statement said.