Hackers Again Target Opposition Outlet Iran International

The IRGC-linked Mashreq News reported today that a "cyber-resistance group" known as Handala Hack Team "completely hacked" the communication channels of Iran International, a London-based diaspora news outlet.

The report includes screen recordings of Telegram messages, images, contacts, and other personal information, claiming that the hackers hijacked Iran International's main communication channel on Telegram and obtained data on over 71,000 employees or affiliates of the organization.

The hackers accused the outlet of working with Mossad and named several Iran International staff members, threatening to release confidential information about them. In recent hours, they have already started releasing what they claim to be private photos of several journalists with the outlet.

In response, Iran International reported that recent leaks of staff Telegram messages are linked to two past cyberattacks carried out by the same group (which it calls Banished Kitten in its coverage) in 2024 and early 2025. It further stated that the vulnerabilities that allowed for these attacks have been addressed.

Handala Hack Team is the label that Islamic Republic state outlets have been using since late 2023 to refer to the regime-controlled Banished Kitten hacking group (Gorbaye Tabeidi in Persian), which has been active since 2008.

Tehran Denies Alleged Outreach to Washington

The Islamic Republic has denied reports of regime officials reaching out to Washington in alleged attempts to restart negotiations between the two nations.

President Donald Trump yesterday said that the Islamic Republic "wants to talk" and that the next round of negotiations between Washington and Tehran would take place next week.

In response, Islamic Republic Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baqaei denied the assertion today and said that Tehran had not "submitted any request for a meeting with the United States."

Charm Offensive Seeks to Drive a Wedge Between Israel, U.S.

With immediate tensions receding following the June 24 ceasefire, Tehran is now doubling down on a charm offensive aiming to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Israel.

In a Financial Times op-ed, Islamic Republic Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrote that talks with U.S. Special Envoy Steve Witkoff made more progress "in five meetings over nine weeks" than in four years of negotiations with the "failed Biden administration." Araghchi blamed Israel's airstrikes for derailing talks and criticized the U.S. role, but emphasized the regime's supposed openness to diplomacy based on "mutual respect." The article focused on framing Israel as a nefarious actor attempting to co-opt Trump's "America First" into an "Israel First" policy.

This comes after the release of President Masoud Pezeshkian's interview with Tucker Carlson yesterday, in which Pezeshkian claimed that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has endorsed U.S. investment in Iran and insisted that the phrase "Death to America" isn't an attack on the American people, or even American officials.

Also today, Former Foreign Minister Javad Zarif posted on X: "An enemy of peace—who is prosecuted for war crimes at the International Criminal Court and for genocide at the International Court of Justice—has no legitimacy to nominate anyone for the Nobel Peace Prize. This is nothing but a worthless ploy to drag Trump into #endlesswars and sacrifice #MAGA at the altar of #FirstNetanyahu."

Concurrent to the regime's ongoing appeals to the U.S., several senior Islamic Republic military officials have warned Israel against violating the current ceasefire.

Brig. Gen. Abolfazl Shekarchi, the senior spokesperson for the General Staff of the Armed Forces, recently vowed a "crushing, serious, and regret-inducing" response if Israel resumes hostilities.

Senior military advisors Brig. Gen. Ebrahim Jabbari and Maj. Gen. Yahya Rahim-Safavi echoed the warning, stating that the regime's full military power has yet to be deployed. Foreign Minister Araghchi echoed the same message in his Financial Times op-ed.

Bill Intensifying 'Espionage' Punishment Sent Back to Parliament for Amendments

The Islamic Republic's constitutional watchdog, the Guardian Council, returned the "Intensifying Punishment for Espionage and Collaboration with Hostile States" bill to the Majles (parliament), citing constitutional violations and legal ambiguities. While warning against the flaws of the bill, the Council lauded the Majles for its efforts and promised aid to streamline the legislative process.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic has intensified its crackdown on the Iranian people. Five individuals arrested during the 2022 nationwide protests were today sentenced to death, while eight others received prison terms and fines.

Increased persecution of religious minorities has also continued. A Baha'i woman was arrested in Sari while visiting her detained husband. A Christian convert, Mehran Shamloo'i, started serving his 11-year sentence for charges including "propaganda against Islam."

In another case, an environmental activist received 30 lashes for allegedly insulting President Ebrahim Raisi (in office from 2021–2024), who died in a helicopter crash last May.

China Aids Tehran in Air Defense Rearmament

According to the Arab intelligence officers, the Islamic Republic has received Chinese surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) to replenish its air defenses, which were damaged during the recent 12-day conflict with Israel. The delivery reportedly came after the June 24 ceasefire, with the Islamic Republic paying for the systems through oil shipments.

China remains the top buyer of the Islamic Republic's oil, allegedly disguising imports through third countries. While details on the number of SAM systems transferred to the regime are unclear, the systems could supplement the Islamic Republic's S-300s and domestically produced platforms, such as the Bavar-373. It is not clear if the regime's S-300 systems, purchased from Russia, are still operational following the 12-day conflict.

On the Radar

- Tehran-backed Houthis attacked a Greek-managed cargo ship in the Red Sea on Monday, killing three mariners, only hours after claiming to have sunk another vessel in the same vicinity. These are the first two Houthi attacks on shipping vessels since late 2024.
- Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, on his way back to Tehran from the BRICS Summit, made a brief stop in Saudi Arabia to meet his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud.
- A Turkish pro-government newspaper, Türkiye, reported that Ankara's recent peace deal with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has disrupted Tehran's regional strategy in Iraq. A senior advisor to the Prime Minister of Iraq stated that Baghdad, under pressure from the Islamic Republic, had long provided the PKK with weapons and funding.
- The Islamic Republic continues to deport Afghans, with over 450,000 deported since June, according to the United Nations' migration agency.
- An 8-year-old child was injured on Qeshm Island after a stray bullet from a military officer's reckless gunfire struck the vehicle he was in. Officials claim the shooting occurred during a police operation against suspected smugglers.

→ For inquiries or more information, please contact ***k.isfahani@nufdiran.org***