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Israel seen as world's sixth nuclear power

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LONDON, May 10 (IranMania) - Israel, which warned Iran against any future attack, is regarded as the sixth country in the world to acquire nuclear weapons, a title its government has never confirmed or denied, AFP reported.



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Despite its ambiguous position, the Jewish state is widely regarded as owning at least 200 atomic warheads, making it the only nuclear power in the Middle East.

British defence specialist Jane's puts the figure at "between 200 and 300".

This estimate "is based on the production capacity of the country's reactors," said John Eldridge, editor in chief of Jane's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence.

The International Institute of Strategic Studies, for its part, estimates the number of warheads as being "up to 200".

The Nuclear Threat Initiative, a US advocacy group co-created by Ted Turner, the founder of CNN and a former senator, believes Israel's nuclear arsenal "is comparable in quality and quantity to that of France and the United Kingdom."

An unknown number of ground-to-ground missiles, comprising short range Jericho 1 and medium range Jericho 2 missiles, forms Israel's strategic force.

The country also acquired three diesel-powered, Dolphin-class submarines -- a non-nuclear variety -- at the end of the 1990s. Each vessel has the capacity to launch six torpedoes. They can also spend up to a month underwater.

"There is no evidence that their weapons are anything other than conventional, but the nuclear option has been considered since 2003," Eldridge told AFP.

In a hardening attitude towards Tehran, Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres warned Tuesday Iran risks its own destruction if it tries to destroy Israel.

Peres, a former Nobel peace prize winner, fired a warning shot across the bows of hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad by saying his call for Israel to be wiped off the map would not go unanswered if it was translated into action.

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