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## Israel to use Syria unrest to reduce Iran clout: ex-Mossad boss

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**Former director of the Israeli intelligence agency, Mossad, says a drastic change to the situation in Syria could have a consequential effect on Iran's regional clout and force it abandon its nuclear program.**

In an op-ed article written for *The New York Times*, Efraim Halevy, who headed Mossad from 1998 to 2002, claimed that Iran's foothold in Syria has enabled Tehran to pursue its "reckless" regional policies, and to stop those policies, Iran's presence in Syria must be ended.

"The public debate in America and Israel these days is focused obsessively on whether to attack Iran...to halt its nuclear...ambitions [and] hardly any attention is being paid to how events in Syria could result in a strategic debacle for the Iranian government," he added.

Halevy said cutting Tehran-Damascus ties would cut off Iran's access to the Lebanese Hezbollah and Hamas in Gaza, and visibly dent its domestic and international prestige, adding that this could force the Iranians to halt their nuclear program.

Halevy further noted that Israel should not be the lone or even the principal actor in speeding Syrian President Bashar Assad's ouster from power.

"Russia and China...should realize that his downfall could serve their interests, too.... Russia simply wishes to maintain its access to Syria's Mediterranean ports in Tartus and Latakia and...if

Washington is willing to allow that... the convergence of American and Russian interests in Iran and Syria could pave the way for Mr. Assad's downfall," he stated.

Halevy added that if the international community does not seize the opportunity to end Iran's influence in Syria, the world will face a choice between a military strike and even more crippling sanctions against Iran, which could cause oil prices to skyrocket.

"Syria has created a third option. We do not have the luxury of ignoring it," he concluded