

Cyberattack on Health Ministry website blocks overseas access

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Pro-Iranian group Altahrea Team purportedly claims responsibility for incident, says assault prompted by weekend IDF strikes in Gaza Strip, Israeli support of sanctions on Iran

A cyberattack disrupted access to the Health Ministry website to users from abroad, the ministry said Sunday.

Though the site was still functioning for local Israelis, those trying enter from outside the country were unable to do so intermittently, the ministry said in a statement.

It said the matter was being dealt with by the ministry and the e-Government unit, a state organization reasonable for maintaining internet services for government websites.

The Health Ministry website offers English-language information on a range of subjects including health rules for visiting Israel during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A group of pro-Iranian hackers based in Iraq and calling itself Altahrea Team claimed responsibility for the assault, according to Hebrew media reports.

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On its Telegram channel, the group reportedly wrote that the attack was carried out in response to the bombing of the Gaza Strip over the weekend and a list of other ills.



Illustrative: A cybersecurity expert stands in front of a map of Iran as he speaks to journalists about the techniques of Iranian hacking, on September 20, 2017, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. (AP/Kamran Jebreili)

The group's purported grievances included sanctions on Iran that the hackers claimed are killing thousands by blocking the arrival of medicines and COVID-19 vaccines, and also support for Ukraine in its battle against invader Russia.

"Now you are in our sights," the group wrote.

Israel hit the Gaza Strip [twice](#) over the weekend in response to rocket fire at Israel communities from the Palestinian enclave.

Last week, Altahrea Team claimed it had attacked the Jerusalem municipality website on Thursday and also that of the Rafael defense company. It also claimed a Monday attack on the Tel Aviv municipality website.

Though the Health Ministry provided no details of the nature of the incident, last week's attacks were all Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) in which website servers were overwhelmed by near-simultaneous requests to connect. That type of assault does not enable data theft.

The Israel Internet Association said in a statement that countering DDoS attacks involves temporarily blocking server requests from abroad which is likely the reason that the Health Ministry site was only available to users inside Israel.

In April, Altahrea Team took responsibility for an online [assault](#) that temporarily took down the Israel Airports Authority.

According to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the [group](#) has in the past also attacked sites in Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Numerous suspected Iranian cyberattacks on Israel were reported in recent years, including one that targeted its water infrastructure in 2020.

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