

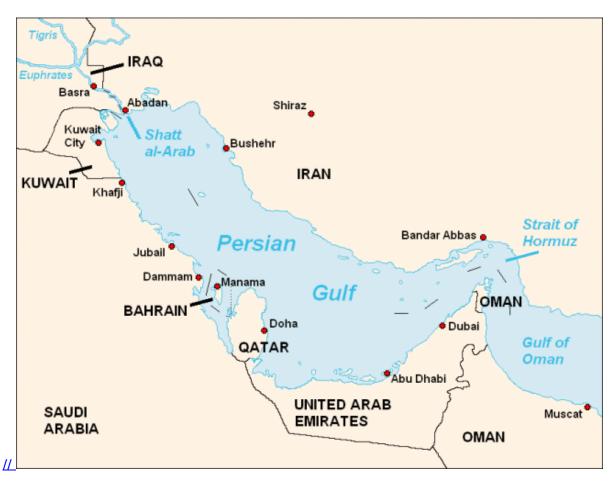
# GCC Backs UN Arms Embargo on Iran

### Why in News

Recently, the <u>Gulf Cooperation Council</u> (GCC) has sent a letter to the <u>United Nations Security</u> <u>Council</u> (UNSC) backing an **extension of its arms embargo on Iran,** just two months before it is set to expire.

### **Gulf Cooperation Council**

- It is a **political and economic alliance** of countries in the Arabian Peninsula.
- It was **established in 1981** to foster socioeconomic, security, and cultural cooperation.
- Members: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
  - All these member countries of the GCC come under the Persian Gulf Region.



## **Key Points**

- The GCC has alleged that Iran had not ceased or desisted from armed interventions in neighbouring countries, directly and through organisations and movements armed and trained by Iran
- Allegation on Iran:
  - The UN, the USA and other armament experts have accused Iran of providing arms to <u>Yemen's Houthi rebels.</u>
  - Iran allegedly arms Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon and Syria and also provides weapons to Shiite militias in Iraq and terrorist groups in Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.
  - The letter also mentioned **Iran's shootdown of a Ukrainian passenger plane** and its **navy accidentally killing 19 sailors** in a missile strike during an exercise.
  - Iran also is **suspected of launching an** <u>attack on Saudi Arabia's oil industry</u> in September 2019.

### Arms Embargo:

- In **2010**, the **UN banned Iran from purchasing foreign-made weapons** like fighter jets, tanks and warships amid tensions over Iran's nuclear program.
  - The embargo **blocked Iran from replacing its ageing equipment,** much of which had been purchased before the <a href="1979">1979</a> Islamic Revolution.
  - An earlier embargo had targeted Iranian arms exports.
- In 2015, under <u>Iran's nuclear deal</u> (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), the UN agreed to end the arms embargo in October 2020.
  - In **2018**, the **USA unilaterally withdrew from the deal** as a part of the maximum pressure campaign to hurt Iran's already ailing economy.
- Internal Conflict in GCC: Even though the GCC has offered a unified statement, it remains affected by internal conflict among the member nations. For example:
  - Qatar crisis, which saw Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates cut diplomatic ties with Qatar and launch a boycott of the nation beginning in 2017.
    - Qatar has had good relations with Iran and has used its airspace while sharing a vast offshore oil and gas field with Tehran (Iran's capital).
    - Qatar is **home to the massive Al-Udeid Air Base** and the forward headquarters of the USA military's Central Command.
  - Oman also has had close ties to Iran and has served as an interlocutor between
    Tehran and the West.
  - On the other hand, **Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are suspicious of Iran** and accuse it of stirring up dissent among Shiite populations in the region.

#### Iran's Stand:

- Iran has denied the various accusations of its involvement in arms supply.
- Iran has **condemned the GCC letter** and called it an irresponsible statement that serves the USA's interests.
- It has also criticized the GCC countries for being "among the largest arms buyers in the region and the world," even amidst the economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### Source: IE

