



## Israel & the United States at War with Iran Special Update from Israel

March 16, 2026

**Prepared by and sent from Jewish Federation of North America's Israel Office**

(Updates this week will also be sent on Wednesday and Thursday)

- **Day 17 of the US/Israel War with Iran**
- **Missile fire continues, as more flights begin to fly into and out of Israel**
- **Some schools have reopened in low-risk areas, while classes in all major cities remain closed, and most other restrictions continue.**

See Jewish Federations' [Joint Security Guidance for Jewish Institutions Following Strikes on Iran](#).

### **Briefing: Israel & the United States at War with Iran with Haviv Rettig Gur Wednesday, March 18 at 12pm ET**

Join the Jewish Federations of North America for a special briefing on the rapidly unfolding conflict involving Israel, the United States, and Iran. We'll be joined by Haviv Rettig Gur, who will provide timely insight and analysis on the latest developments and what they may mean for the region and the Jewish community worldwide.

Click [here](#) to register.

### **Missile and Rocket Fire**

- Iran launched several ballistic missiles toward central Israel in the last 24 hours, and emergency services said at least some of the munitions **appeared to again include cluster sub-munitions**. Multiple impact sites were reported, and footage showed damage to a home in one central town. A woman in her 30s was taken to hospital with minor trauma wounds. Rescue services said at least two impacts were consistent with cluster munitions or falling fragments.

- The **number of missiles being fired** by both Iran and Hezbollah has been decreasing. On the first day of the war, 350 were fired, decreasing to 175 on the second. By the third day, it was 120, and 110 on the fourth. Since that time, only 30-50 missiles have been launched at Israel each day. A similar number of Iranian and Hezbollah drones have been launched against Israel each day.
- An Iranian ballistic missile **struck the northern Arab-Israeli town of Zarzir** over the weekend after its warhead remained intact despite an attempted interception. The impact caused extensive damage to homes and vehicles and injured around 60 people, most of them lightly, from shattered glass and debris. One woman was moderately wounded by shrapnel. Emergency and Home Front Command teams were deployed to the scene to assist residents and assess damage.
- Despite Iran's recent threats against Israel's economic infrastructure, **property damage so far is less** than one-tenth of what was seen during Operation Rising Lion, according to Israel's Tax Authority. Although the current campaign has already outlasted the June 2025 war, a steady decline in missile launches makes it less likely Iran will "close the gap." Analysts note that even at full capacity, "Iran is not the same force it was eight months ago."
- In order to minimize disruptions and emotional distress, the IDF's Home Front Command has adjusted its algorithm so that **warning alerts are sent to people in a narrower geographic window** with each impending missile strike.
- Watch: [Israelis near Lebanon border try to maintain normal life despite Hezbollah threat](#)

## The War with Iran

- U.S. Central Command reported that a **U.S. KC-135 aerial refueling aircraft crashed in western Iraq** last Thursday, during operations linked to the war with Iran. The aircraft was involved in an incident with another tanker in friendly airspace, with the second aircraft landing safely. All six U.S. service members on board were later confirmed dead. U.S. officials stated that the crash was not caused by hostile fire or friendly fire, and an investigation into the circumstances of the accident is ongoing.
- Israel's air force **destroyed Ali Khamenei's aircraft** at Tehran's Mehrabad Airport overnight. The IDF said the plane had been used by Khamenei and other senior officials to advance military procurement and manage ties with "axis" countries through domestic and international flights. It described the aircraft as a "strategic asset" and said [its destruction](#) harmed Iran's coordination with proxy groups, military buildup, and rehabilitation capabilities. The military added that earlier in the month, it had struck 16 aircraft it said were used by the Quds Force to move weapons and cash to proxy groups, chiefly Hezbollah, at the same airport, and that Iran had tried to conceal planes by moving them into storage areas for out-of-service planes.
- The Israeli Air Force also launched ongoing "extensive" airstrikes against **Iranian regime infrastructure sites** in Tehran, Shiraz, and Tabriz. One [strike](#) targeted Iranian military space infrastructure, [dismantling a compound](#) that was used to develop capabilities to attack satellites. The site was linked to Iran's military space program, including work on the Chamran-1 satellite developed by Iran's Defense Ministry electronics industries and launched by the IRGC in September 2024.
- Some reports said that President Trump was weighing a plan to **seize Iran's Kharg Island oil depot** if Iran continued blocking tanker passage through the Strait of Hormuz. Such a move would require American boots on the ground. Earlier, the US struck Iranian military infrastructure on the island, destroying naval mine storage facilities, missile depots, and other military sites. The island is a critical part of Iran's oil export network, processing roughly 90 percent of the country's crude exports.

- Iran's military issued **threats against the USS Gerald R. Ford strike group**, adding that logistics and service centers enabling the carrier to remain operational would be treated as targets. A spokesperson for Iran's military called the carrier in the Red Sea a threat and said associated support hubs were considered legitimate targets.
- Iranian authorities have conducted **sweeping raids in recent weeks and arrested hundreds of people** on suspicion of "cooperation with the enemy." Iran's judiciary chief said there should be no delay or leniency in cases involving people accused of links to Israel or the United States. He urged accelerating the review and resolution of cases tied to alleged threats to public security.
- Iran's **internet disruption** deepened sharply as the blackout expanded to a wider scale than previously seen during the war. Connectivity rapidly collapsed overnight, and Iranian state-linked accounts that usually posted frequently, including Fars News Agency, abruptly stopped updating around the same time. The cause was not immediately clear. A watchdog said the disruption appeared to affect routes many Iranians had still been using to get online, including VPNs and Starlink connections, leaving far fewer users able to connect.
- Iran's military **warned countries in the region against cooperating with Iran International, a London-based opposition channel**, saying media infrastructure used to support it would be placed in Iran's "bank of targets." A statement accused the broadcaster of using satellite capacity and regional media infrastructure to "spread false narratives that served US and Israeli goals." Iran has designated the outlet a terror organization since 2022 and has recently said cooperation with it is punishable. Iranian authorities also announced arrests of at least 18 people accused of sending images and information to the channel.
- IDF spokesperson Effie Defrin said **toppling Iran's regime was not an IDF war goal**. He said the army instead aimed to create conditions that undermined it so that Iranians could eventually determine their own future.
- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded publicly after an **Iranian conspiracy theory falsely claimed he had been killed**, releasing [a short video](#) to debunk the rumor. The claim, circulated by Iran's Tasnim News Agency without evidence, alleged Netanyahu had died in an Israeli strike, with online speculation also asserting that earlier footage of him was AI-generated. In the video, Netanyahu appeared casually picking up a coffee and directly addressed the rumors, jokingly inviting viewers to "count his fingers" after claims that manipulated footage showed six.

## The War with Hezbollah

- Israel said it launched a **targeted ground operation in southern Lebanon** to expand the buffer zone after Hezbollah attacks. The IDF said that in [fighting in the eastern sector](#), a unit encountered Hezbollah operatives and killed several of them. It described the operation as an effort to expand the "forward defense area," including destroying infrastructure and eliminating operatives in the area.
- The IDF reported that **most of Hezbollah's pre-war rocket arsenal had been destroyed**, estimating that 85 – 90% of the group's rockets held before 2023 were eliminated. According to the military, Hezbollah possessed more than 150,000 rockets before the war, with remaining stockpiles reduced substantially over time through airstrikes and ground operations in southern Lebanon.
- Israel said it also carried out another wave of airstrikes on **Hezbollah infrastructure in Beirut** overnight.
- Israeli and Lebanese officials reported that preparations were underway for **possible direct negotiations**, with talks aimed at reaching a ceasefire and addressing Hezbollah's military presence in southern Lebanon. According to multiple reports,

Lebanon was forming a delegation. International actors, including France and the United States, were involved in facilitating discussions, though no date or agreed framework had been set and Israeli officials publicly offered differing assessments about whether talks had formally begun.

## Israel's Home Front

- Schools reopened in some areas of Israel after more than two weeks, with returns limited to zones assessed as **lower risk for missile fire**. An estimated 350,000 pupils and children in daycare were eligible to return, though many locations reopened only partially due to staffing, transportation and shelter constraints. Schools had closed on March 1, and nationwide regulations kept them shut for two full weeks due to ongoing missile and drone attacks from Iran and Hezbollah, even as many workplaces reopened. Under the government's color-coding system, "yellow" areas were permitted to open schools if protected spaces were available, including the Beit She'an Valley, the Dead Sea area, parts of southern Israel, including the Gaza border region and in Judea and Samaria. Schools remained closed in major cities, including Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa, and mayors in some municipalities in permitted areas (such as Ashkelon) chose to keep schools closed for safety reasons.
- Israel's Health Ministry said **142 people were taken to hospitals** over the past 24 hours because of the war, with three in moderate condition and 134 in good condition. Five people were treated for anxiety, and the ministry noted some injuries may have occurred while people rushed to shelter rather than from direct hits. Since the war began on February 28, the ministry said 3,369 people have been admitted to hospitals, with 81 still hospitalized. Of those currently hospitalized, one person was in critical condition, seven were in serious condition, 14 were in moderate condition and 59 were in good condition; the figures included civilians and soldiers.
- Israel's Ministry of Transportation said it was **lifting capacity limits** on long-range flights (to the US and the Far East). Until now, only 100 passengers had been permitted on each flight. More than 100,000 Israelis have already been brought home on rescue flights since the war began.
- In coordination with the U.S. Embassy, the U.S. Department of State and Israel's Ministry of Transportation, EL AL has gained government approvals for special **non-stop recovery flights from Tel Aviv to New York** for U.S. citizens currently in Israel. Beginning today, the airline will operate six dedicated daily flights for U.S. passport holders whose original flights were canceled since the war began. The flights will operate at full capacity. Customers with EL AL tickets whose flights were canceled and who have not yet been rebooked will be proactively contacted.

## Public Opinion in Israel

- New public-opinion data from the Israel Democracy Institute showed **strong overall Jewish support for Operation Roaring Lion**, with 81% of Israelis expressing support after 12 days of fighting. Among Jewish respondents, support remained largely unchanged from earlier polling at 92.5%, though the share who said they "strongly support" the operation declined from 74% to 68%.
- Among Arab Israelis, **opposition to the operation remained the majority position**, with 65.5% opposing the joint US-Israeli action against Iran.
- Political affiliation continued to shape Jewish opinion, with **broad cross-camp support but notable variation by ideology**. Support was lowest among Jews identifying with the Left (68%), and significantly higher among those in the Center (95%) and on the Right (96%).

- Survey findings indicated **high confidence among Jewish Israelis in personal protection from Iranian attacks**, with 79% reporting they felt protected, up five percentage points from the first week of the operation. Among Arab respondents, the sense of protection remained low and showed no change.
- Geographic differences emerged within the Jewish population, with **lower feelings of protection in major urban areas** such as Tel Aviv, Haifa and the center of the country. In contrast, residents in northern areas reported comparatively higher levels of perceived protection despite ongoing exposure to Hezbollah fire.
- A majority of Jewish respondents expressed **confidence in the achievability of military objectives**, with around 70% believing Iran's nuclear program and ballistic missile threat could be eliminated. Sixty-one percent also believed the Iranian regime could be overthrown.
- Arab Israelis were significantly more skeptical about outcomes, with **fewer than one-third believing any of the stated goals were achievable**. This pessimism applied across all major objectives cited in the survey.
- Perceptions of coordination with Washington were generally positive, as **a majority of Jewish Israelis and over half of Arab Israelis saw strong US-Israel alignment** in the operation. Specifically, 82% of Jews and 52% of Arabs said the interests of the two countries were very or fairly strongly aligned.

## Global and Diplomatic Developments

- President Trump said the **United States and Israel were working together on securing maritime traffic** through the Strait of Hormuz and that Washington was speaking with about seven countries about policing the shipping lane. He demanded that countries that benefit from the strait help protect it and argued the US needed it less because of its own oil access. Trump said China received about 90% of its oil through the strait and declined to say whether Beijing would join any coalition.
- **China said it was communicating with all sides** over the Strait of Hormuz and reiterated calls for de-escalation and an immediate ceasefire. Beijing said it had remained in contact with parties involved and aimed to promote "cooling down" to prevent wider economic fallout.
- EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said **EU member states** would discuss steps to help keep the Strait of Hormuz open. She said ensuring the strait remained open was in Europe's interest and that options were being discussed ahead of an EU foreign affairs meeting in Brussels. The statement came as Washington urged other countries to help reopen the vital oil-shipping route. Japan said it was not considering ordering maritime security operations despite US pressure to help protect Hormuz.
- President Trump warned that **NATO faced a "very bad future"** if allies failed to assist in opening the Strait of Hormuz.

## The Region

- Flights to and from **Dubai were temporarily suspended** after a drone-related incident near Dubai International Airport caused a fuel tank fire, with officials saying the blaze was contained and caused no injuries. Emirates announced a temporary suspension of flights to and from Dubai.
- **A drone attack on oil infrastructure** in Fujairah, on the UAE's east coast, sparked a large fire in the Fujairah Oil Industries Zone, authorities said. Officials reported no injuries and said firefighting efforts were continuing to bring the blaze under control. Also in the UAE, an Iranian strike on the outskirts of Abu Dhabi killed a Palestinian civilian after a missile hit a car.

- Saudi Arabia said its air defenses intercepted 61 drones since midnight, with the Defense Ministry reporting the **overnight intercepts** occurred in the east of the country.
- Rockets landed near **Baghdad International Airport** for the second time in a day, with militia sources claiming the projectiles targeted Victoria Base, a former US base that still supports American operations. An earlier strike that day wounded four airport security personnel and staff.
- The New York Times reported that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had been speaking regularly with President Trump and **urging him to continue attacking Iran harshly**. The report said he repeated advice attributed to Saudi Arabia's late King Abdullah to "cut off the head of the snake." Similar language appeared in leaked diplomatic cables from 2010 in which Gulf leaders pressed for stronger American action against Iran's nuclear program.

## Jewish Federations and Partners

**Jewish Federations of North America's Israel office** has activated our emergency protocols and is in close contact with the government of Israel and our partners.

Some **Jewish Federations partner updates**:

### The Jewish Agency for Israel:

- Through the Jewish Agency's Roaring Lion Fund, **emergency grantmaking expanded significantly**, with approximately \$590,000 allocated to date. A total of 537 grants were approved, and an additional 463 grant applications remained in process at the time of reporting.
- The Agency's Amigour subsidiary continued addressing food insecurity, **distributing nearly 7,000 food baskets** to individuals and households impacted by the war. The effort is focused on populations facing immediate material need.
- The Agency's support for Holocaust survivors continued through **volunteer engagement**, with 166 university students maintaining their placements. Volunteering took place either virtually or in person where possible, including locations such as Beer Sheva.
- Youth programming and family support were reinforced by **Shinshinim volunteer deployments**, with 64 participants active across youth frameworks, absorption centers and services for displaced families. Their work focused on continuity and emotional support during displacement.
- In the Nitzana area near the Egyptian border, **short-term safe housing was provided** to 270 individuals requiring immediate shelter. An additional 50 people from other parts of Israel without access to safe rooms were also hosted. The Nitzana campus also functioned as a logistical staging and accommodation site for arriving volunteers and IDF personnel.
- Watch: [The Jewish Agency: Standing with Israel During Operation Roaring Lion](#)

### American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC):

- **Emergency systems** developed and supported by JDC are now providing real-time data for national and municipal decision-making, including active use of the Be'er Sheva Emergency Management System and the EMUN national crisis response dashboard tracking displacement, injuries, property damage claims and economic indicators.

- Utilization of JDC's **Arabic-language emergency resource portal** has increased, with more than 36,000 visits recorded as of March 11 by educators and therapists working in Arabic-speaking communities.
- **Mental health efforts** by JDC have focused on culturally tailored support for Ethiopian Israelis, including a March 10 webinar with more than 65 participants, delivered in partnership with the Ministry of Health and focused on accessible services and practical coping tools.

#### **OTO - The Israeli Autism Association**

- OTI – The Israeli Autism Association, **maintained continuity of support for autistic children and adults** amid repeated sirens and widespread disruption. Services included a 24/7 professional hotline providing guidance to parents and educational staff, along with online support spaces for autistic adults focused on stress management and maintaining daily frameworks. Multidisciplinary teams adapted existing crisis-response and early-intervention models to help individuals cope with sudden changes and anxiety and to support educators and community teams in real time.

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Jewish Federations **continue to monitor the situation** on the ground very closely and will report as needed.

*For more information, please contact: Jewish Federations of North America's Dani Wassner [dani.wassner@jewishfederations.org](mailto:dani.wassner@jewishfederations.org). Subscribe to this weekly update [here](#).*