



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

March 18, 2026

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

- **Day 19 of the US/Israel War with Iran**
- **Elderly couple killed as missile fire into Israel continues**
- **Iran's de facto leader and other senior figures killed in Israeli air strikes**

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

## Missile and Rocket Fire

- Overnight, an Iranian ballistic missile barrage struck central Israel, **killing a couple in their 70s in Ramat Gan** after a cluster-munition warhead [hit their residential building](#). Emergency services said the two were apparently on their way to their apartment's safe room but did not manage to reach it in time. The same barrage caused damage at multiple sites across central Israel, including Tel Aviv's Savidor Central train station, where [platforms were hit](#) and rail service was temporarily suspended. (Emergency train crews worked through the night to ensure that the station could reopen by morning commuter peak hour). Additional impact sites were reported in nearby cities, and medics treated several people for light shrapnel injuries, injuries sustained while running to shelters, and acute anxiety.
- A neighbor of the couple killed in Ramat Gan said the **missile hit about half a minute after the siren sounded**, leaving the victims no time to reach their safe room. The neighbor, who was interviewed on Israeli radio, said he and his

wife entered their reinforced room even before the alert, while the blast destroyed the adjacent apartment. He described thick smoke, a strong smell and severe damage inside the building, and said he initially hoped the neighboring apartment was empty. The elderly couple was found buried under rubble after being thrown by the explosion.

- Iran fired several [additional missile salvos](#) throughout the night and into the morning, triggering **repeated sirens across central and northern Israel**. The IDF said some of the missiles were intercepted, while others struck open areas. In later attacks, military assessments reported no injuries, with only [limited damage](#). The IDF said these subsequent launches involved smaller numbers of missiles compared to the earlier overnight barrage.
- Iran publicly acknowledged launching **missiles carrying cluster munitions** at Israel (banned under the international Convention on Cluster Munitions), saying the attack was revenge for the killing of Ali Larijani. Iranian state media said the missiles used in the overnight attack included advanced ballistic systems. [Footage published in Israel](#) showed submunitions dispersing over central areas, contributing to the widespread damage.
- Yesterday, an [Iranian missile barrage](#) that targeted Jerusalem [resulted in impacts at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#), one of Christianity's [holiest sites](#), as well as on the Temple Mount, which is Judaism's most sacred place and home to Islam's Al Aqsa Mosque (the third holiest site for Muslims).
- Last night, Hezbollah launched a large rocket barrage toward northern Israel, which the IDF said was **intended to include at least 100 rockets** but ultimately consisted of around 40 short-range rockets, several missiles, and five drones. Most of the projectiles were intercepted, landed in open areas, or fell short, landing inside Lebanon, according to the military. One rocket struck a home in Karmiel, causing damage but no injuries, while all five drones were intercepted. The IDF said it carried out airstrikes on launchers, launch teams and command centers before, during, and after the barrage.
- **Northern border communities continue to face** multiple immediate warnings, with alert times ranging from 15 seconds to under one minute. With such small margins, frequent overlap between sirens and impact or interception sounds has been reported. In the past three days, northern border communities recorded the highest number of alerts nationwide, surpassing central Israel on certain days, particularly for alerts without advance warning. Communities with the highest cumulative alert counts since the start of Operation Roaring Lion included Metula, Kiryat Shmona, Shlomi, Margalioth, Yir'on and Misgav Am.

## The War with Iran

- In an attack yesterday, Israel [killed Iran's de facto leader Ali Larijani](#), in an overnight airstrike in Tehran, alongside Gholamreza Soleimani, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Basij paramilitary force, and Soleimani's deputy. The IDF said Larijani, who formally served as secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, assumed effective leadership of the regime after Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was killed at the start of the war. According to the military, Larijani led Iran's political-security coordination and directed

- international activity against Israel and other countries in the region, and was also involved in overseeing violent crackdowns on protests inside Iran.
- The IDF carried out widespread airstrikes in Tehran targeting **Iranian internal security and ballistic-missile infrastructure**. According to the military, the strikes hit headquarters and facilities linked to internal security forces, units responsible for suppressing protests, and components of Iran's ballistic-missile array, along with air-defense systems. An Israeli official separately said that Iran's intelligence minister, Esmail Khatib, was targeted and killed in an overnight strike.
  - Iranian authorities announced the execution of a man convicted of **spying for Israel's Mossad**, marking the first such execution publicly reported since the war began. The judiciary said he had provided images and information about sensitive locations and had met Israeli agents abroad.
  - The International Atomic Energy Agency said it received a report from Iran that **a projectile struck the grounds** of the Bushehr nuclear power plant complex. Iran reported no damage to the plant and no injuries to staff. The IAEA reiterated its call for restraint to prevent the risk of a nuclear accident during the fighting.

## The War with Hezbollah

- In response to missile attacks by the terror group, the **IDF struck Hezbollah infrastructure** across Lebanon, including [weapons depots and command centers](#) in Tyre, and [targets in Beirut](#) overnight. The Israeli Navy also carried out a strike on what the military called a key Hezbollah operative in Beirut. In southern Lebanon, the IDF said it struck a headquarters belonging to the Imam Hossein Division, an Iranian-backed militia operating alongside Hezbollah. Some of the strikes followed evacuation warnings issued to local residents. See [this detailed explanation](#) of Israeli strikes in Lebanon.
- The IDF again [warned civilians in southern Lebanon](#) to evacuate to the **north of the Zahrani River**, repeating an alert first issued days earlier. The military said Hezbollah's activity was forcing it to operate with significant force in the area and warned that movement southward could endanger lives. Israeli forces were reported to have pushed deeper into southern Lebanon in recent days as part of efforts to distance Hezbollah from the border. The warning emphasized that airstrikes were ongoing.
- The IDF released [video footage](#) showing troops identifying Hezbollah operatives transporting RPGs and other weapons in southern Lebanon, followed by **a drone strike that killed them**. In a separate incident, the military said two Hezbollah operatives who had launched rockets at Israeli forces were later struck and killed. The IDF also said troops demolished more than 80 Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon and killed additional operatives who emerged from one of those locations.
- The IDF confirmed that its **new "Iron Beam" laser-based air-defense system**, "Or Eitan," had entered operational use along the northern border and was already intercepting drones and missiles. A military source said the system was activated following the large Hezbollah barrage launched overnight.

## Israel's Home Front

- A total of 3,663 people in Israel have been **displaced by the war**, with 2,343 evacuated to 27 hotels and 1,320 housed within host communities. Evacuations involved residents from 29 localities. 16 dedicated assistance centers for people left without permanent housing are helping them access services focused on welfare, education, and health needs.
- The Home Front Command's **restricted emergency guidelines** remain in place, including limits on gatherings to 50 people outdoors and up to 100 people indoors in locations with access to approved protected spaces.
- Israel's Health Ministry said 192 people were hospitalized over the previous 24 hours as a result of the fighting, with **four in moderate condition** and most others listed in good condition. The Ministry said at least one person was treated for anxiety and noted that some injuries may have occurred while people were trying to reach shelters rather than from direct impacts. Since the war began on February 28, the Ministry said 3,727 people had been admitted to hospitals, with 74 still hospitalized at the time of reporting.
- No **government-ordered evacuation of northern border communities** has been implemented, and no large-scale self-evacuation has been observed, though some families have begun independent short-term departures.
- The government has approved a **full compensation framework for businesses** in the northern confrontation line, while businesses elsewhere were eligible for partial compensation if revenues declined by more than 25%.
- The government also approved an emergency allocation of approximately \$22 million for the purchase and deployment of protective shelters nationwide. The decision authorized the Defense Ministry and the IDF Home Front Command to procure and install shelters based on operational criteria and requests submitted by local authorities.
- The Knesset approved an updated **2026 state budget** in a first reading, adding about \$8.5 billion to Israel's defense spending amid the war with Iran and Hezbollah. The revised budget passed 53 – 45 and raised the deficit ceiling to roughly 5.1% of GDP, with the government citing expanded reserve mobilization, increased combat expenditures, and urgent procurement needs. The government had already authorized an additional \$700 million for classified defense purchases in an overnight decision, citing immediate operational requirements. A 3% across-the-board budget cut was approved earlier, including reductions totaling approximately \$41 million from rehabilitation budgets, affecting health and welfare. Also, a \$3.3 million allocation was approved to strengthen community resilience in northern border localities, including trauma care, parental and youth resilience programming, training for emergency teams and community relief activities. The budget must still pass second and third readings by the end of March, or the Knesset would automatically dissolve, triggering early elections.
- Read: [Inside Ben Gurion under fire: 'No airport has operated like this under war conditions.'](#)

## Global and Diplomatic Developments

- President Donald **Trump said the United States was “not ready to leave” the war** with Iran yet, but told reporters that U.S. forces would withdraw in the “very near future.” Speaking at the White House, Trump avoided laying out a detailed post-war plan, while insisting that Iran had suffered severe damage and would take years to rebuild if the fighting ended now. He also sharply criticized NATO allies for refusing U.S. requests to help secure the Strait of Hormuz, calling their stance a “very foolish mistake,” even as he said the United States did not ultimately need their assistance.
- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [delivered a message to the Iranian public](#) from the Air Force command center at the Kirya, urging them **to celebrate the Iranian festival of Nowruz under Israeli airstrikes**. He said Israel had killed two senior “terrorist chieftains” over the previous 24 hours and was continuing to strike Iranian operatives in streets, intersections and city squares. Netanyahu said the operations were intended to enable Iranians to mark the Festival of Fire, while Israel maintained aerial surveillance. He closed the message by wishing Iranians a happy Nowruz and stating that Israel was “watching from above.”
- Israel’s Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar said **Israel had “effectively won”** the war with Iran, while stressing that the campaign would continue until its objectives were fully achieved. Sa’ar said Israel’s goal was to remove what he described as existential threats, but he did not specify how the government would determine when those goals had been met. He said Iran had been dramatically weakened by the fighting and was no longer the country it had been before the war began on February 28. At the same time, Sa’ar acknowledged that any change to Iran’s regime could only come from the Iranian people, indicating that such an outcome was not imminent.
- Exiled Iranian **Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi** said the “final call” for mass protests against Iran’s regime was approaching, but warned it must be issued at the right moment to avoid widespread bloodshed. Pahlavi said the Islamic Republic had shown it was willing to kill large numbers of civilians to remain in power, and argued that opposition activity must be carefully coordinated. He said the regime had been weakened by Israeli and U.S. military pressure alongside organized domestic resistance, including covert networks operating inside Iran. Pahlavi also outlined plans for a post-regime transition, describing efforts to prepare professionals and experts for rebuilding the country after a collapse.
- Saudi Arabia announced it would **host a consultative meeting of foreign ministers from Arab and Muslim countries** in Riyadh to discuss regional security and stability amid the ongoing war. The statement did not list participating countries or outline specific agenda items. The meeting was scheduled for Wednesday evening.
- **Argentina’s President Javier Milei sharply criticized Iran** while commemorating the anniversary of the 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, declaring that “there can be no truce with terrorism.” The attack killed 22 people and injured more than 200, and Argentine courts have ruled that Iran ordered the bombing. Milei reiterated support for Israel and the United States, describing Israel as a strategic ally.

## The Region

- The U.S. **aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford** was expected to temporarily pull into port for repairs after a fire on board took about 30 hours to extinguish, according to U.S. officials. The carrier, deployed in operations against Iran and operating in the Red Sea, was expected to head to Souda Bay on the Greek island of Crete. Nearly 200 sailors were treated for smoke-related injuries after the fire broke out in the ship's main laundry area, and one service member was evacuated off the vessel, officials said. The Pentagon said the ship's propulsion system was not damaged and that the carrier remained operational.
- Saudi Arabia said it destroyed six drones in the eastern part of the kingdom, while Kuwait's military said its air defenses responded to **hostile rocket and drone attacks**. In Iraq, security sources reported that a drone attack targeted the US embassy in Baghdad, with an explosion heard nearby.
- Qatar's defense ministry said its forces intercepted **a missile attack targeting the country**, after residents in Doha reported hearing explosions. The ministry did not specify the origin of the missile or the intended target. No injuries or damage were reported in the statement. The incident was described as part of the wider regional escalation.
- Australia's prime minister said an Iranian projectile struck near Australia's Middle East military headquarters at **Al Minhad base in the United Arab Emirates**, without causing injuries. He said all Australian personnel were safe.

## 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, **expanded emergency assistance continued**, with approximately \$707,000 allocated. A total of 601 grants were approved, and an additional 497 grant applications remain in process.
- The Jewish Agency's Amigour subsidiary addressed immediate civilian needs by **distributing food and stabilizing damaged housing**, already delivering 10,665 food baskets and sealing 269 homes damaged during the fighting.
- Aliyah-related emergency services have seen sustained demand, with **high-volume intake at the Global Center**, including 14,099 calls received and 850 case files opened.
- A special flight to Israel overnight brought more than 50 olim - **new immigrants from France and the United Kingdom**. The group included over 20 young families, as well as a 5-month-old infant and a 92-year-old, with arrivals settling in multiple cities including Netanya, Ashkelon, Arad and Ra'anana.

### Hosen Yeladenu:

- During Operation Roaring Lion, the Jewish Federations-supported Yeladenu Initiative has supported children and parents facing sustained disruption by combining immediate emergency response with strengthened community infrastructure.
- Working closely with local authorities and frontline partners, Yeladenu identified gaps beyond basic information provision and delivered targeted professional support — grounded in the understanding that parental resilience is a key driver of children’s well-being.

Yeladenu launched focused tools for families, including the “Stronger Now” app for children ages 3 – 7 and a national digital campaign promoting parental resilience and directing families to practical resources. At the same time, the initiative fast-tracked municipal parenting centers, expanded workshops and support groups and strengthened institutional capacity through training and digital engagement — building lasting systems to support families through ongoing uncertainty and recovery.

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

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