



ISRAEL UPDATE



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

March 4, 2026

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

- **Day 5 of the US/Israel War with Iran**
- **Israel orders the population of southern Lebanon to evacuate**
- **Trump said he may have forced Netanyahu's hand to attack Iran**
- **Israeli fighter pilot downs an enemy (Iranian) aircraft – the first such incident since 1982**
- **The US has destroyed all 11 of Iran's warships in the Gulf of Oman**

**Briefing: Israel & the United States at War with Iran
TODAY at 3pm ET**

Join Jewish Federations of North America for a special briefing on the rapidly unfolding conflict between Israel, the United States, and Iran. We will be joined by Col. (Ret.) Miri Eisin, who will provide a timely update on the latest developments.

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Fighting Iran

- An **Israeli Air Force F-35 shot down** a Russian-made Iranian Yak-130 fighter jet over Tehran, in what the IDF said was the first-ever instance of an F-35 downing a manned enemy aircraft. Listen to the [pilot's conversation](#) with the Air Force Commander.
- The IDF continues to carry out **extensive waves of attacks** against [Iranian regime targets](#) in Tehran and elsewhere in Iran. One set of airstrikes carried out in Tehran yesterday hit dozens of [command centers](#) belonging to Iran's Basij paramilitary force and internal security services. The military said the sites were used to maintain regime control and "situational awareness" across the country. Additional strikes targeted Iranian army logistics facilities, missile launchers and [air defense systems](#).
- US Central Command said **American forces have struck nearly 2,000 targets** in Iran so far; they described the campaign as the largest firepower buildup in the region in a generation. The commander said US forces have destroyed large portions of Iran's air defenses, missile stockpiles, and naval assets. At the same time, Iran has launched hundreds of missiles and thousands of drones in retaliation.
- The Pentagon identified **four US Army reservists killed** in a drone strike on a command center in Kuwait, marking the first confirmed American fatalities of the Iran war. No Israeli soldiers have fallen in combat yet in the current war.
- The US has also **destroyed all 11 of Iran's warships** in the Gulf of Oman, blocking one path to its attempted disruption of global trading routes.
- Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps claimed, however, that it has "complete control" **over the Straits of Hormuz**, warning that vessels attempting to pass through the vital shipping route could be hit by missiles or drones. The statement came after President Trump

said the US Navy was prepared to escort oil tankers through the Straits if necessary.

- Iranian Kurdish militias have held talks with the US about a potential **operation against Iran's security forces** in the country's west. Sources say Kurdish groups based in Iraqi Kurdistan have been training for an attack to weaken Iran's military and to create space for an internal uprising. The groups have reportedly requested US and CIA support, including weapons.
- Iranian state media reported that a **three-day state funeral** for Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei will begin Wednesday night in Tehran, starting with a farewell ceremony at the Imam Khomeini prayer grounds.
- Mojtaba Khamenei, the **late leader's son, has emerged as the leading candidate** to succeed him, though clerics reportedly fear his appointment could make him an immediate target for assassination. Israel's Defense Minister Israel Katz said that whoever is appointed to succeed Khamenei will be an "unequivocal target for elimination." In a statement, Katz said any leader who continues Iran's policies against Israel, the US, and the region while repressing the Iranian population, would be targeted regardless of identity or location.
- Sri Lanka's military said it rescued at least 30 people from a **sinking Iranian ship near the country's southern coast** after receiving a distress call. Reports indicate the ship may have been hit by a US submarine.

Israel's Home Front

- Israel continues to sustain **fire on two fronts**. Iranian ballistic missiles have been joined by a steady stream of attacks from Hezbollah on Israel's northern border, including dozens of rockets and UAVs. Almost all of Israel's population, including all of the major population centers, are ordered to shelter by multiple sirens each day.
- Nonetheless, Iran's **ability to fire missiles appears to be decreasing**. On the first day of the war, Iran managed to fire around 350 ballistic missiles. On Day 2, they fired 175. On Day 3, the number was 120 and on Day 4 (yesterday), only 50.
- In a concerning development, **Hezbollah fired rockets toward Tel Aviv and the Haifa** area, marking its first long-range attack on

central Israel since the start of the Iran war. The IDF said three rockets were launched, with two intercepted and one landing in an open area without injuries, while dozens of additional rockets and several drones targeted northern Israel, wounding at least one person in a border community.

- To help the population distinguish among different types of attacks, the IDF wrote to civilians to clarify these instructions:
- **Missile Launch from Lebanon** – There is no early warning. A Red Alert is received immediately upon launch. Upon receiving the alert, enter a protected space immediately.
- **Launch from Yemen** – There is an early warning. The arrival time to central Israel is typically between three and five minutes, but may vary. Upon receiving the early warning, act immediately to improve your location and find the best possible protection near you. When the additional alert (Red Alert) is received, enter a protected space immediately.
- **Launch from Iran** – There is an early warning. The arrival time to central Israel is generally about seven minutes. Upon receiving the early warning, act immediately to improve your location and find the best possible protection near you. When the additional alert (Red Alert) is received, enter a protected space immediately. Please remain alert, avoid complacency, and make sure you know where the nearest protected space is located.
- Israel's Health Ministry said **219 people were taken to hospitals over the past 24 hours** as a result of the fighting with Iran, most of them only lightly wounded or suffering anxiety. Since the start of the conflict, 1,274 people have been evacuated to hospitals nationwide, with fewer than 100 still hospitalized.
- Despite the war, the shekel strengthened against the dollar by two points on Monday; the **Tel Aviv Stock Exchange had its best day** in almost five years.

Diplomatic Developments

- President Donald Trump said he may have **"forced Israel's hand"** into launching the war against Iran, arguing that he believed Tehran was preparing to strike first. Trump rejected claims that Israel dragged the US into the conflict, insisting that US pressure

and stalled nuclear negotiations led him to conclude that preemptive action was necessary. He said Israel and the US were both ready to act and claimed that Iran's military capabilities, including its navy, air force, and air defenses, have largely been "knocked out." Trump said he gave the green light only after concluding diplomacy had failed.

- **Canadian Prime Minister** Mark Carney said the joint Israeli–US strikes on Iran appeared, at least on their face, to be inconsistent with international law. Speaking publicly, Carney stressed the importance of adherence to international norms even in moments of severe crisis.
- **California Governor Gavin Newsom** issued an unusually sharp criticism of Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, claiming that Israel's current path could eventually force the US to rethink its military support of the Jewish State. Newsom accused the Israeli government of dragging Washington into what he described as an "illegal and dangerous war," while also tying Netanyahu's actions to domestic political pressures and legal troubles.
- President Donald Trump has **threatened to sever all US trade ties with Spain** after the European country refused to allow American forces to use jointly operated bases for strikes against Iran. Speaking at the White House, Trump sharply criticized the Spanish government, calling it uncooperative, and said he had instructed the Treasury Department to cut off all dealings with Spain. Spain's trade relationship with the United States is governed by the US-EU trade agreement.
- The **social media platform X announced it will crack down on AI-generated** war footage that is shared without disclosure. The company said users who post undisclosed AI-generated videos of armed conflicts will lose eligibility for revenue sharing, with repeat violations leading to permanent suspension from monetization. The move comes amid a surge of realistic fake war footage circulating online since the outbreak of the Iran conflict.
- According to media reports, Prime Minister **Netanyahu informed President Trump days in advance that Khamenei would be meeting** with senior advisers, creating an opportunity for a decisive strike. The report says US intelligence confirmed the information, and that Trump ultimately approved the operation after concluding that diplomacy with Iran had failed.

- **US Senator Lindsey Graham** [publicly urged](#) President Trump to expand the campaign to include strikes on Hezbollah in Lebanon, arguing that the group has American blood on its hands.

Fighting Spreads

- The US State Department has authorized non-emergency US government personnel and their families in **Cyprus to leave the country** due to rising safety concerns. The US embassy said the decision reflects the deteriorating regional security situation in the European Union country.
- The United States has also **closed its embassies in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait** after Iranian drone strikes hit both diplomatic compounds. US and Saudi officials said two drones struck the American Embassy in Riyadh, causing a small fire and minor damage, while the US mission in Kuwait was also closed after nearby strikes sent smoke rising over the area.
- **Saudi Arabia reported intercepting two cruise missiles** south of Riyadh, while state media said nine drones were also downed after entering the country's airspace. Saudi authorities did not specify who launched the attacks.
- **French President Emmanuel Macron** ordered France's nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, the Charles de Gaulle, to move to the Mediterranean and said Paris will also send anti-missile and anti-drone systems to Cyprus following the drone attack on a British air base on the island. Macron said the carrier will be accompanied by frigates and its air wing, and that France has already deployed Rafale fighter jets, air-defense systems, and airborne radar to the region. French officials said the country has intercepted drones in defense of allies and will continue taking necessary protective measures.

Flights

- Israel's Ministry of Transport has announced that **Ben Gurion Airport will begin a gradual re-opening**, starting in the early hours of tomorrow morning. In the first stage, only passengers arriving from outside Israel will be permitted to travel.
- EL AL reports it has **completed preparations to resume operations** and receive returning passengers. Starting tonight, EL

AL will proactively assign stranded passengers abroad to recovery flights to Israel, based on original ticket dates, at no additional cost. Returns will be conducted gradually from some 20 international gateways, in line with government guidelines and airport landing limits, with priority for humanitarian and medical cases. Further details [here](#).

- Israeli airline **Arkia also announced plans to operate repatriation flights** for Israelis stranded abroad. The airline said initial inbound flights would operate from cities including Larnaca, Athens, Rome, Dubai, Bangkok and New York, with priority given to passengers whose previous flights were canceled when Israel's airspace was shut.
- As part of planning to return Israelis stranded abroad, authorities are formulating the "**Lion's Wings**" program, led by the Ministry of Transport, which includes a return option via flights to Taba Airport (Egypt) and onward entry to Israel by land. The National Security Council recommends flying directly to Taba Airport and, upon landing, proceeding immediately to the Taba border crossing without staying in Egypt, due to the ongoing Level 4 travel warning. The official program has not yet launched; some travelers are currently using private, non-governmental routes via Sinai/Sharm el-Sheikh/Taba and continuing by land to Israel. Travelers entering Egypt are advised to follow strict safety precautions, including avoiding publicly identifying themselves as Israeli or Jewish and refraining from posting travel details on social media.

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:

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC):

- JDC will hold a webinar today at 2 pm ET to provide an update on its efforts during the current emergency. Register [here](#).
- In response to missile strikes that rendered residential buildings uninhabitable in Beit Shemesh and Beer Sheva, JDC is working with local authorities to support displaced residents.
- JDC initiated a partnership with the Beer Sheva municipality to expand emergency assistance to evacuees whose homes were damaged or destroyed.
- As part of this response, JDC is supporting the distribution of first-aid and basic-needs kits to evacuees, including toiletries, clothing, and other essentials, and providing additional items for children for Purim.
- JDC is providing emergency readiness and medical equipment to support local response efforts.
- JDC deployed community case workers to strengthen support for older adults and people with disabilities affected by the evacuations.
- A flexible humanitarian assistance fund has been activated to enable timely, case-specific support for residents in need.
- JDC-supported digital emergency platforms serving Arab-Israeli communities recorded a significant increase in use during the current emergency, indicating expanded access to emergency information and well-being resources.
- In northern Israel, JDC activated a shelter-based support initiative in Nahariya, distributing 160 respite kits to public shelters within one day. The respite kits include age appropriate games and activities designed to support children and families who are spending extended periods in shelters.

The Jewish Agency for Israel:

- The Jewish Agency launched a new emergency mechanism, the Roaring Lion Fund, to provide immediate financial assistance to civilians affected by the current war with Iran.
- The fund provides automatic, direct grants of \$1,300 to individuals whose homes were damaged or destroyed, or who were physically injured as a result of the attacks. Grant recipients do not need to apply; eligible cases are identified by local authorities and conveyed to the Jewish Agency for processing.
- The fund was created because existing victim-assistance mechanisms are limited to terror incidents and do not cover wartime damage. In addition to financial assistance, the Jewish Agency is offering emotional-resilience support to affected individuals, including individual assistance, workshops, and group-based support.
- The Roaring Lion Fund is administered by the same professional team that oversees the Jewish Agency's Fund for Victims of Terror, allowing for rapid deployment.
- Following the start of the current emergency, the Agency's Youth Futures mentors shifted to emergency operations and are maintaining direct contact with participating children and families to assess needs and identify urgent cases.
- Youth Futures is assisting affected families with navigating their rights and accessing available support, including coordination with Jewish Agency emergency response mechanisms.
- Mentors nationwide are continuing regular contact with children, both remotely and in person where feasible, to identify emerging needs and provide emotional support.
- Local program directors are participating in municipal emergency coordination, including ongoing communication with local officials and involvement in local emergency forums.
- The Youth Futures–Early Childhood (Heartbeats) program is maintaining continuous contact with young families in 16 communities, using accessible communication platforms.
- Early Childhood mentors are providing parents with practical guidance to support young children during the emergency, including maintaining routines, addressing anxiety, and furnishing age-appropriate coping strategies.
- **The Israel Trauma Coalition (ITC):**

- During the current escalation, ITC is operating its National Resilience Center in emergency mode in coordination with the Ministries of Health and Welfare and other government agencies.
- Since the start of the current emergency, ITC's hotline has received 135 calls. More than half of the hotline calls were from parents seeking support and practical tools to help children experiencing anxiety and emotional distress.
- ITC's services are reaching evacuees currently housed in hotels, including families with children, as part of the broader displacement caused by missile strikes.
- ITC continues to focus on parental guidance and child-focused emotional-regulation support as schools remain closed and families spend extended periods in protected spaces.

Israel Association of Community Centers (IACC):

- Following the missile strike in Beit Shemesh on March 1, IACC community center teams began working in coordination with the local municipality to support affected residents. Community centers in Beit Shemesh served as temporary gathering points for residents evacuated to community facilities and hotels, including those in Jerusalem.
- IACC teams provided safe spaces for community members to process trauma and facilitated online activities aimed at supporting children and families impacted by the attack.
- Due to the security situation, all in-person programming nationwide was suspended, with activities shifting to online formats, bomb shelters, and evacuation centers.
- Hundreds of IACC community centers across the country activated emergency programming tailored to different populations, including children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- For Purim, community centers implemented localized activities adapted to security constraints, including online Megillah readings, small-scale neighborhood activities near protected spaces, family programming conducted in shelters, distribution of safety guidance and online Home Front Command sessions for Bedouin communities, and delivery of Purim supplies to homebound seniors and people with disabilities

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

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 Wasser dani.wasser@jewishfederations.org. Subscribe to this weekly update [here](#).