

Prayer Briefing

Iran and the Persian Gulf

Iran · United Arab Emirates · Bahrain · Qatar · Kuwait · Israel · Lebanon 106 million people

2026-03-05

Jan 2026

- Hundreds of thousands march chanting 'Death to Khamenei' – largest protests in Islamic Republic history

On Saturday morning, 28 February 2026, as parents in Minab – a fishing town on the Persian Gulf – were dropping their daughters at school, two hundred Israeli fighter jets were crossing Iranian airspace. Within hours, the girls' school was rubble. Over one hundred children were dead. By nightfall, Ayatollah Khamenei was dead in the ruins of his compound, alongside his defence minister and the IRGC commander. The strikes came hours after Oman announced a near-breakthrough in nuclear negotiations.

Jan-Feb

- Security forces kill 3,000-7,000 protesters; mass arrests across Kurdish and Baluch provinces

Iran's response was ferocious. Operation True Promise IV launched hundreds of missiles and drones at Israel and US bases across six Gulf states. The UAE intercepted 165 ballistic missiles and 541 drones. Debris struck Dubai airport, homes in Manama and Doha. QatarEnergy halted LNG production. The IRGC declared the Strait of Hormuz closed. Twenty percent of the world's traded oil was cut off overnight.

27 Feb

- Oman announces near-breakthrough in nuclear talks – hours before strikes launch

As of 4 March: 555 confirmed dead across twenty-four provinces, 148 children killed, internet at four percent nationally – an information blackout over eighty-eight million people. Schools closed. Ten medical centres damaged. Regional airspace shut.

28 Feb

- US-Israeli strikes across 24 provinces; Khamenei, defence minister, IRGC commander killed; girls' school in Minab destroyed

And here is the layered truth: many Iranians sheltering from bombs greeted Khamenei's death with relief. In January, hundreds of thousands had marched chanting "Death to Khamenei." The security forces killed thousands in response. The man whose compound was destroyed was the architect of that massacre. Celebration and terror coexist in the same bodies, in the same moment. The women who marched for freedom are the women in darkened homes with no internet. Freedom is not delivered by airstrike.

28 Feb

- Iran launches Operation True Promise IV – missiles and drones at Israel and US bases in 6 Gulf states

1 Mar

- IRGC declares Strait of Hormuz closed; internet drops to 4%; Brent crude surges 13%

● Conflict ● Economic

● Humanitarian

5K	148	24	4%	30%
people killed	children killed	provinces struck	internet still working	of food imported

Nearly all casualties are civilian. Satellites have detected 3,813 fires across Iran in five days. The country imports 30% of its food – and those supply chains are now severed. Crops across the region are already failing.

What Sustains



Strike locations, chokepoints, and refugee flows as of 2026-03-05

Before the missiles struck, the things that kept Iran's people alive were already fragile. In Kerman, women were preparing for the pistachio pruning — Iran produces forty percent of the world's pistachios, and pruning cannot wait for war. In Khorasan, saffron merchants could no longer process payments through sanctioned banks. Iran imports thirty percent of its food; with supply chains now severed, crops across the country are failing.

The war does not touch Iran's twenty-four peoples equally. The 5.6 million Kurds — at the forefront of January's protests — now face bombardment in regions already under security lockdown. The 1.3 million Bakhtiari pastoralists cannot begin their spring migration through territory under fire. The 900,000 Khuzestan Arabs, whose water has long been diverted for refineries, are now the buffer between military targets and civilian life. The 1.7 million Iranian Romani, in the informal economy with no fixed documentation, are invisible in every casualty count. The Gulf fishermen of Hormozgan cannot put to sea while the Strait is a war zone.

What sustained people was already fragile: aquifers at crisis levels, an economy crushed by sanctions. The 4.4 million Afghan nationals face displacement within displacement. The 355,000 Armenian Christians are moving toward the border. The things that kept people alive — water, bread, movement, connection — are now the first casualties.

What Is Being Taken

Crude oil and natural gas · Liquefied natural gas · Military basing rights · IRGC proxy arms supply · Civilian infrastructure and human life

Nearly five thousand people are dead. Forty aid workers killed. Ninety-nine in every hundred casualties are civilians. The bombs falling on Tehran, Isfahan, Qom, Karaj, and Kermanshah are destroying the infrastructure through which eighty-eight million people eat, drink, communicate, and heal.

The deeper extraction is structural. Iran sits atop the world's fourth-largest oil reserves. For a century, this wealth has been extracted by competing empires — the British through Anglo-Iranian Oil, the Americans through Shahr-e Kerman concessions, and since 1979 by a theocratic elite that funded proxy networks rather than water infrastructure. SIPRI records zero arms transfers to Iran in five years — sanctions blocked imports completely, so the missiles now hitting Gulf cities are entirely domestically manufactured. The regime chose weapons over qanats. Now the aquifers are collapsing and the oil revenue is gone.

The Strait of Hormuz is the chokepoint where all corridors converge. Its closure reveals a final extraction: the Gulf states hosting US bases did not choose this war. Their citizens die from retaliation triggered by operations launched from their soil. The cost cascades outward — oil to fertiliser to food prices. The people who pay are everywhere: fishermen in Hormozgan, schoolgirls in Minab, migrant workers in Dubai, factory workers in Incheon whose heating depends on Qatari gas no longer being produced.

Who acts

US-Israeli coalition (Operation Roaring Lion / Epic Fury) — strikes across 24 provinces, decapitation of Iranian leadership. Iran (Operation True Promise IV) — retaliatory missiles and drones at Israel and US bases in 6 Gulf states.

Who enables

Gulf basing states (Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE) — hosted the military infrastructure from which strikes were launched; their citizens now die from the retaliation. Intelligence apparatus and logistics networks that made coordinated strikes possible. Insurance markets whose withdrawal enforces the Strait of Hormuz closure.

Who pays

148 children killed in their schools. Fishermen in Hormozgan who cannot put to sea. 4.4 million Afghan refugees facing displacement within displacement. 1.7 million Iranian Romani invisible in every casualty count. 900,000 Khuzestan Arabs — the human buffer between military targets and civilian life. Migrant workers in Gulf states whose employers have shut operations. Factory workers in Incheon whose heating depends on Qatari gas no longer produced. Every family whose food prices will rise as the oil-to-fertiliser-to-grain cascade reaches them.

What flows out of Iran: oil, gas, and strategic leverage. What does not return: functioning hospitals, school buildings, aquifer water tables, the lives of girls in Minab. When the Strait of Hormuz closes, everyone discovers they were always connected.

The strikes killed Iran's leaders. Iran retaliated with missiles across the Gulf. Gas and oil production shut down. The Strait of Hormuz closed. Twenty percent of the world's traded oil was cut off. And from there, the cost reaches outward: oil prices drive up fertiliser, fertiliser drives up grain, and within weeks, families in Yemen, Lebanon, and Palestine — who import nearly all their food — will go hungry because of a war they had no part in.

There is no clean reading of this crisis. A tyrant is dead, and people who suffered under his rule feel genuine liberation. Those same people are being bombed by the powers that killed him. Children who never heard of nuclear negotiations are dead in their classrooms. The fishermen of Hormozgan, who catch the shrimp that feeds the poorest families on Iran's coast, cannot put to sea. The contradiction is not a puzzle to solve but a wound to hold.

For Prayer

Iran and the Persian Gulf

This Week

Feb 28 Iran — US and Israel launch coordinated strikes across Iran — Operation Roaring Lion / Epic Fury. Supreme Leader Khamenei killed alongside defence minister and IRGC commander. Girls' school struck in Minab, Hormozgan province, killing over 100 children. Iranian Red Crescent reports 201 dead, 747 injured across 24 provinces within hours.

Feb 28 Gulf States — Iran launches Operation True Promise IV — missiles and drones at US bases in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan. UAE intercepts 165 ballistic missiles, 2 cruise missiles, 541 drones. Dubai airport struck. QatarEnergy halts LNG production. Saudi Arabia shuts Ras Tanura refinery.

Mar 1 Iran — Death toll rises to 555 confirmed (Iranian Red Crescent). 6 US soldiers killed. IRGC declares Strait of Hormuz closed. Iran's internet drops to 4%. Schools closed. Iranian authorities text citizens warning against protests. Iranians celebrate Khamenei's death on rooftops while sheltering from airstrikes.

Mar 2 Lebanon — Israel expands operations to Lebanon — heavy airstrikes across south, Bekaa, Beirut suburbs. Evacuation orders for 53 villages. 30,000 displaced to shelters. 11,000 people cross into Syria at Masnaa. West Bank and Gaza crossings fully closed.

For The children of Minab...

For the families of the girls killed at their school in Minab, Hormozgan province — families in Iran's poorest region, who sent their daughters to learn and received their bodies back. For the teachers who survived. For the Red Crescent volunteers who carried the dead. May their grief not be instrumentalised by any power.

For Iranian people between liberation and bombardment...

For the women who marched for freedom in January and now shelter in darkened rooms with no internet. For those who feel relief at a tyrant's death and terror at the bombs that killed him. For those receiving state texts warning them not to protest while their cities burn. May they find paths to self-determination that no external power can grant or revoke.

For Afghan refugees in Iran...

For the 4.4 million Afghan nationals and 1.65 million registered refugees in Iran, already surviving on less than two dollars a day, now facing displacement within displacement. For those at the Turkish, Afghan, and Armenian borders wondering whether to flee. May borders remain open and refoulement be refused.

For Gulf state workers and families...

For the migrant workers in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE — many from South Asia and East Africa — whose labour built the cities now under missile fire. For the 20,000 travellers stranded in the UAE. For the QatarEnergy and Ras Tanura workers whose facilities were struck. May those with least power not bear the greatest cost.

For The Strait of Hormuz and all who depend on it...

For the fishermen, sailors, and port workers of the Persian Gulf whose livelihoods have vanished overnight. For families in South Korea, India, and Japan whose heating and transport depend on oil and gas that no longer flows. For those who will feel rising food and fuel prices in the coming weeks. May the chokepoint that reveals our interconnection also reveal our shared responsibility.

Seeds of Hope

Even now, in the ruins, the Iranian Red Crescent has mobilised volunteers across twenty-four provinces — logistics units, medical teams, rapid response squads, pharmacies dispensing emergency supplies. In Minab, rescue teams worked through the night to recover children from the school rubble. UNHCR, which has maintained a presence in Iran since 1984, keeps its five field offices and refugee reception centres open, providing counselling through helplines that somehow still connect. In Tehran, despite the four-percent internet, neighbourhoods are organising mutual aid — sharing bread, water, information carried by foot. The bazaar networks that predate the Islamic Republic,

that survived the Iran-Iraq War, that outlasted every sanctions regime, are adapting again: informal supply chains redistribute essentials when formal systems fail.

Outside Iran, the diaspora that marched for freedom is now raising funds for humanitarian relief. In Portland and Munich and Los Angeles and Toronto, the same communities that celebrated Khamenei's death are collecting medical supplies for the people living under the bombardment that killed him. This is not contradiction — it is moral complexity, and it is the ground on which authentic solidarity stands.

Looking Ahead

The next thirty to ninety days are shaped by three critical uncertainties. First, Iran's leadership succession: with Khamenei, the defence minister, and the IRGC commander dead, the power structure may fragment between hardline elements seeking escalation, pragmatists seeking negotiation, and reformists who see opportunity. The January protest movement's energy has not dissipated — it has been complicated. Second, the Strait of Hormuz: every day of closure bleeds Asian economies of approximately 20 million barrels of oil equivalent. Insurance markets, not navies, will likely determine when shipping resumes. Third, Lebanon: Israel's expansion of strikes into Beirut and the south threatens a parallel displacement crisis — 11,000 people crossed into Syria in a single day, and Lebanon's fragile infrastructure cannot absorb another 2024-scale displacement.

The humanitarian window is narrow. Iran's internet blackout means the international community is operating blind — casualty figures are certainly undercounts. UNHCR requires \$454 million for the region and has received 15 percent. The wheat that should be growing in Iranian fields right now — planted last autumn, needing spring care — may go untended. The Bakhtiari pastoralists who should begin their spring migration cannot move. The saffron merchants who should be finalising European contracts cannot communicate. Every week of war compounds the agricultural damage that will shape food security through 2027.

Psalm 95 (Venite)

O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us heartily rejoice in the rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving and be glad in him with psalms.

O come, let us worship and bow down and kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

For the Lord is a great God and a great king above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth and the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands have moulded the dry land.

O that today you would listen to his voice: 'Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, on that day at Massah in the wilderness, when your forebears tested me, and put me to the proof, though they had seen my works.'

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Gospel: Luke 4:1–13 — The temptation in the wilderness

Reading: Isaiah 2:4 — 'They shall beat their swords into plowshares'

As you hold this briefing, consider these questions in silence before bringing them to prayer:

- 1. The people of Iran experienced both liberation and terror in the same moment — relief at a tyrant's death, fear of the bombs that killed him. Where in our own lives do we accept false binaries rather than holding contradictions with honesty?*
- 2. The Strait of Hormuz has revealed that the fishermen of Hormozgan and the commuters of Seoul are bound by the same water passage. What invisible chokepoints connect our daily comfort to someone else's daily danger?*
- 3. Freedom was not delivered by airstrike in January, when Iranians marched; it will not be delivered by airstrike in February, when Iranians were bombed. What does it mean to support another people's self-determination without imposing our own?*
- 4. 'Harden not your hearts.' The psalm's warning is addressed not to the combatants but to the worshippers. In what specific way has our heart hardened to the suffering of people we have been taught to see as enemies?*