



# FACT SHEET IRAN

1 February 2026 – 2 March 2026

## OUTLOOK

After the so-called 12-Day War, the Iranian leadership made it clear that the conflict was not regarded as over, but rather as having entered an interim phase. After the protests in January 2026, there was even official talk of the “13th day of the 12-Day War” – an indication that Tehran regards the conflict as an evolving strategic process. The current escalation therefore appears less like a rupture than a continuation of an existing dynamic of confrontation, for which the political and security elite had been preparing for months. The confrontation between the USA, Israel, and Iran has rapidly escalated from an intense phase of strikes to a regional escalation scenario. The death of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei represents a strategic turning point, but has not yet triggered an actual breakdown of the system.

In the short term, military operations are likely to continue. Iran is pursuing a strategy of controlled escalation: sustained but measured attacks against Israel and targeted actions against US interests and locations in the Gulf. The aim is not so much a quick military victory as a gradual increase in political, economic, and security costs. The conflict is increasingly turning into a contest of endurance.

Three factors will be decisive in the coming days and weeks: 1) the stability of the Iranian leadership after the formation of the Interim Leadership Council – especially with regard to possible domestic unrest. 2) the extent and intensity of the involvement of regional proxies in expanding the area of conflict. 3) the political robustness of US-Israeli coordination and that of the Gulf states.

## DOMESTIC POLITICAL DYNAMICS

Despite the targeted killing of high-ranking security figures and the Supreme Leader, the Iranian system has so far shown no signs of imminent collapse. The Islamic Republic is not a personalist regime, but boasts multi-layered command structures, parallel security apparatuses, and a power base firmly rooted in ideology.

The rapid formation of an Interim Leadership Council and coordinated public appearances by key figures (including Larijani, Qalibaf, Pezeshkian, Ejei, and General Radan) are intended to demonstrate

continuity. The crucial decisions will be made within a close circle of security elites. A swift appointment process would signal stability; delays could indicate internal tensions. A formally weaker successor is likely – no one will match Khamenei’s authority. The increased presence of Basij and IRGC forces in cities, as well as public warnings that protests will be punished as “collaborating with the enemy,” demonstrate the high priority given to domestic stability.

## ETHNIC GROUPS

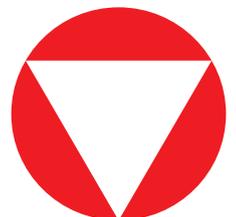
The ethnic and religious dimensions remain structurally and strategically relevant. There is historical potential for opposition in the Kurdish provinces, but currently no coordinated mobilisation. Security forces are showing an increased presence there. The Coalition of Political Forces of Iranian Kurdistan, founded in February 2026, brings together several influential Kurdish parties with the aim of regime change, self-determination, and a democratic-secular order.

In the short term, it will not significantly alter the balance of power, but in the medium term it could gain importance in a transformation scenario, particularly in matters of federalism and decentralisation. In Sistan-Balochistan, the situation remains inherently unstable. The political dynamics are less party-based than religious and local. Outside actors, religious authorities, and civil society networks have stepped up their coordination, but without clearly stating their position since the start of the war. The Baloch movement has mainly regional mobilisation potential and could become relevant as a security-political factor in an instability scenario.

One possible risk scenario concerns the border regions in their entirety. If state capacities are overstretched by external military pressure, provinces such as Kurdistan, Sistan-Balochistan, or parts of Khuzestan, could become zones of conflict between security forces and armed groups. This would be a shift from a primarily external conflict to a hybrid situation with internal fragmentation – less a sudden collapse than a gradual erosion of state control.

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## MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

As part of the joint offensive by US and Israeli forces, which began on 28 February 2026 (Operation Lion's Roar/Epic Fury), military and security-related infrastructure belonging to the Iranian state were targeted. The operation differed from classic air campaigns in its broad selection of targets: in addition to conventional military facilities, the focus was particularly on intelligence, command and control centres, and key decision-makers in the security architecture.

From the perspective of the USA and Israel, the initial phase brought significant tactical successes on three levels: the elimination of high-ranking leaders, damage to strategic infrastructure, and operational disorganisation within the Iranian system. Iran, however, responded in accordance with a long-discussed security doctrine in the event of a comprehensive war: sustained missile and drone attacks in the region with the aim of regionalising and globally increasing the cost of the conflict. The possible expansion to trade and energy routes in the Persian Gulf was repeatedly part of Iran's deterrence rhetoric in the weeks leading up to the war. Despite significant leadership losses, Iran's capability to respond militarily has not collapsed. This points to prepared command structures and functioning decentralised delegation mechanisms.

The attacks targeted a wide range of military capabilities: IRGC command posts and headquarters in and around Tehran; intelligence and security structures, including the Sarallah headquarters as the central coordination point for domestic security forces; ballistic missile sites, air defence systems, and drone bases to degrade offensive capabilities; and naval and coastal infrastructure, including warships and port facilities such as Konarak, where satellite images show significant damage.

## ANALYSIS

The military operations carried out as part of the US-Israeli offensive against Iran have assumed a significant humanitarian dimension over the past two days. According to Iranian media and government agencies, the number of casualties on Iranian territory has risen significantly and includes both civilian and military losses. According to the Iranian Red Crescent, at least 555 people have been killed in Iran so far as a result of the air strikes, which have targeted more than 130 districts. In addition, there are hundreds of injured and significant damage to civilian infrastructure, including residential areas and medical facilities. A particularly tragic incident, which has been widely reported in Iranian media, is the attack on the girls' elementary school in Minab (Hormozgan province). According to the Iranian Ministry of Health and state media, between 148 and 180 people were killed. This school was located near a military facility but, according to the official report, was hit "during regular school hours." Iranian sources report explosions near hospitals, particularly in Tehran, which has led to further uncertainty among the population. Concrete casualty figures from these incidents have not yet been conclusively verified, but the presence of such reports underscores the spread of the conflict to civilian areas.

While the offensive has achieved certain tactical objectives, the evolving dynamics show that the war is not restricted, but escalating into a regional crisis with far-reaching humanitarian consequences. The destruction of schools and damage to medical facilities not only contribute to immediate suffering, but also have a longer-term destabilising effect on societies and the functioning of the state. Without clearly defined political objectives and robust channels for de-escalation, the conflict threatens to escalate from a limited military engagement into a broader regional war, with humanitarian, political, and economic consequences reaching far beyond the immediate crisis region.

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