



FACT SHEET IRAN

01 August – 19 August 2026

OUTLOOK

The war between Iran on the one side and the US and Israel on the other, which has been waged since 28 February 2026, has radically altered the security situation in Iran, the region and beyond. Whilst in the first weeks of the war the attacks were targeted against the political and military leadership, with the aim of weakening the regime's decision-making capability and possibly facilitating regime change, the focus later shifted to domestic security installations – in particular police stations in Tehran and border posts in the Kurdish border regions – and finally to civilian and economic infrastructure, including energy facilities, refineries, ports and communications networks. Despite substantial losses, there was neither a collapse of state institutions nor a nationwide uprising. However, the war and the subsequent ceasefire under the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) have triggered far-reaching political, foreign policy, military and societal changes that are likely to have a decisive influence on the development of the Islamic Republic in the coming months.

FOREIGN POLICY

In terms of foreign policy, Tehran is increasingly trying to use the war to achieve political objectives. Iran argues that neither the permanent presence of US forces nor bilateral security guarantees can ensure adequate regional security, and that a new regional security order is therefore required. At the same time, the war has made the Strait of Hormuz the focal point of Iranian foreign policy. Tehran links the Strait's reopening to the lifting of sanctions, an end to the US blockade and greater regional responsibility for maritime security, whilst, at the same time, seeking to expand Iranian influence over shipping through an Iranian-Omani agreement. The Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, concluded on 7 August 2026 between Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan, underscores the growing importance of regional security cooperation. For Tehran, this is positive on the one hand, as neighbouring states no longer associate their security exclusively with Washington;

on the other hand, the agreement between three Sunni states also gives rise to new concerns. The Ukrainian attack on an Iranian merchant ship in the Caspian Sea on 25 July 2026 also highlighted the fact that the conflict could spread to the Caspian region. Despite issuing threats to that effect, Tehran has so far refrained from a military response.

DOMESTIC POLITICAL DYNAMICS

On the domestic front, rapid changes are currently under way which are closely linked to the consequences of the war. Following the killing of Ali Khamenei and numerous other senior figures, political and military decision-making has increasingly centred on a smaller circle comprising the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), the Office of the Supreme Leader and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The appointment of the former IRGC Commander Mohsen Rezaei as Secretary of the SNSC on 10 August 2026 should be understood not so much as a fundamental change of course, but rather as a reorganisation of the security structure. It serves both to rebalance the domestic power dynamics and to adapt command structures to the ongoing national security threats. Observers also regard this as an attempt to rebalance the power dynamics within the inner leadership circle and to limit the influence of those opposed to further negotiations. At the same time, the long-standing 'economy of resilience' is at a turning point as a result of sanctions, a lack of investment and declining economic adaptability caused by the war. Whilst Tehran claims a military success, economic pressures – and with them the risk of societal unrest – continue to increase. Against the backdrop of a war that has merely been 'paused', parliament is already toughening security legislation concerning espionage and foreign influence. This suggests that the political leadership is increasingly linking protection against external influence with greater control over societal and political activities at home.



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ETHNIC GROUPS

The security situation in Sistan and Baluchistan Province remains tense. In recent months, the number of kidnappings carried out by criminal gangs has risen significantly. The Sunni cleric Molana Abdolhamid has therefore repeatedly criticised the government in his Friday sermons and, on 7 August 2026, stated that the local population themselves would take action against the kidnappers if the security forces proved unable to restore security. This provoked sharp criticism from Ayatollah Mahami, Shia Friday preacher and representative of the Supreme Leader in Zahedan and led to strong reactions from Sunni religious figures. Such tensions between Sunni and Shia religious leaders are nothing new in Iran. In the past, however, the Supreme Leader frequently addressed such conflicts publicly, emphasised the unity between Shia and Sunni Muslims, and sought to prevent further escalation. Under the new leadership, which has not yet commented publicly on this matter, it remains to be seen how Sunni-Shia relations develop. On the western borders, the security situation has also deteriorated since July 2026. The Iranian Armed Forces have repeatedly carried out drone strikes and cross-border tactical operations against Iranian-Kurdish armed groups in Iraqi Kurdistan. At the same time, there is growing evidence of increased state repression against Kurds and Balochs. In early August, UN Special Rapporteurs warned of increasing persecution of ethnic activists. According to the UN, at least 24 Balochs and 22 Kurds have been executed so far in 2026; further individuals have been arrested.

MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

From a military perspective, it has become apparent that, despite substantial losses, Iran was able to effectively defend its most important geopolitical stronghold – the Strait of Hormuz – for months on end. According to recent reports in the New York Times, Iran still possesses around 70 per cent of its pre-war stockpile of ballistic missiles, some 60 per cent of its launchers, and has restored the majority of its underground military infrastructure to operational status. Furthermore, the Iranian missile attacks on US bases in Jordan in July 2026 demonstrate that the Iranian Armed Forces have adapted their operational doctrine and learnt from the military experiences of recent months. In particular, the combination of drone and missile strikes, as well as the coordinated deployment of multiple waves of attacks, points to

a growing ability to saturate enemy air defence systems and reduce their effectiveness. It is also important to note the comprehensive reshuffle of the military leadership in early August. Mojtaba Khamenei appointed Ali Abdollahi as Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, Ahmad Vahidi as Commander of the IRGC, Kiumars Heydari as Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Mostafa Izadi as Deputy Commander of the IRGC, and Ali Ozmaei as Commander of the IRGC Navy. These personnel decisions point to a further concentration of power amongst experienced IRGC veterans and a greater centralisation of military decision-making structures. Of particular significance is the directive to complete the full integration of the Armed Forces General Staff with the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters. Together with the establishment of the Supreme Defence Council, which has already taken place, this suggests an attempt to unify the previously fragmented command and control structures and to improve Iran's military decision-making and responsiveness in the event of a crisis. Also noteworthy is Hossein Taeb's return to the helm of the Basij. Taeb had been removed as head of the IRGC's intelligence organisation in 2022 following several serious intelligence failures.

ANALYSIS

Iran initially perceived the war as an attack on its political and military leadership, as well as on its national security. With the subsequent attacks on civilian and economic infrastructure, the conflict increasingly developed, from Iran's perspective, into a war against the country's economic foundations. Strategically, this gave rise to an asymmetrical balance of power: Whilst the US and Israel continue to enjoy clear superiority in air power, reconnaissance and precision strikes, Iran still possesses sufficient missiles, drones, underground infrastructure and maritime capabilities to make complete military neutralisation an extremely costly endeavour. There are many indications that Iran's new offensive approach is based on the military experiences of recent months. Although Tehran is aware both of the risks of escalation and the economic risks, the leadership appears to have concluded that this will further drive up the military, political and economic costs for the US. At the same time, there are many indications of a further strengthening of domestic security and control structures. Whilst the war has not triggered a widespread exodus, the state is nevertheless stepping up its control measures, particularly in the border regions.

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