

Middle East Situation

Information Cut-Off: 1800h (GMT), 23 March 2026

Executive Summary

This evening, the exact status of discussions between the US and Iran are unclear. Neither Tehran nor Washington has agreed about what discussions have been had, if any, with the Iranian government accusing President Trump of having “backed down”.

Attacks have continued across Iran, Israel, the Gulf states and in Lebanon this afternoon.

United States

President Trump said this morning that his administration has held “productive conversations” with an unspecified “respected Iranian leader” regarding a ceasefire. Subsequently, he postponed strikes on power plants and energy infrastructure for five days. Brent crude fell to USD96 per barrel (13 per cent) in response.

President Trump has repeated his claim throughout the day, stating that his main envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner have reportedly been engaging with Iranian officials this afternoon. He has explicitly stated that the Iranians “want peace: they’ve agreed they will not have a nuclear weapon”. Trump has said that the US will “keep bombing” if talks with Iran are not successful, but has stressed that both sides want to make a deal.

President Trump has been careful to point out this afternoon that the US shares major points of agreement with Tehran, that Israel would likely be happy with any US diplomatic deal, but that he cannot guarantee any deal with Iran.

Iran

The Iranian media, quoting an unspecified source, has claimed that there was no direct or indirect contact between President Trump and the Iranian government at all, and that the US president has simply “backed down” in the face of Iranian warnings. Unofficially, the Iranian foreign ministry also denied any contact and has accused Trump of trying to buy time to bring down energy prices.

The Iranian parliament has also denied that negotiations have been held with the United States, dismissing the reporting as “fake news”. The parliamentary speaker has demanded “complete punishment” of the aggressors.

This afternoon, Israel claimed to have launched a new wave of attacks across Iran. It reportedly hit air defences and an IRGC ground forces headquarters, a Quds Force base and intelligence site, a military missile factory and other production facilities. (These claims remain unverified).

Israel

Hezbollah has reported that it continues to launch indirect fire at IDF units assembling near the Lebanese border.

Denying the existence of any negotiations, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said it launched a new wave of strikes against Israel this afternoon.

Regional

Lebanon

An artillery shell has reportedly landed inside the headquarters of the UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon.

Israeli Defence Force attacks this afternoon have targeted Hanin, a town in the Bint Jbeil district of southern Lebanon.

Denying the existence of any negotiations, the IRGC said it launched a new wave of strikes against US bases in the Gulf this afternoon.

International

The UK Foreign Office has demanded an explanation from the Iranian ambassador after two Iranian men under arrest in Britain were today charged with “providing assistance to a foreign intelligence service”.

Travel

Maritime

The Omani government has said this afternoon that it is working to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz.

Two Indian-flagged LPG tankers have reportedly sailed through the strait safely; hundreds of other vessels remain blocked.

Aviation

Air France this afternoon extended the suspension of flights to and from Dubai and Riyadh until 31 March, and to and from Tel Aviv and Beirut until 04 April.

Advice

- Do not travel to the Middle East.
- Avoid all travel within the region unless safe travel can be guaranteed.
- Shelter in place in a secure location.
- Follow instructions from local authorities and any national embassy guidelines.
- Monitor official updates and ensure phones are set up to receive alerts.
- Avoid any demonstrations or gatherings in the region.
- Globally, reconsider travel to any locations with links to Israel or Judaism.
- If you need further support, or wish to discuss options for evacuation, call NGS.

Contact us

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