

Middle East Situation

Intelligence Cut-Off: 1530 (GMT), 18 March 2026

Executive Summary

A deal has been reached to allow the flow of oil from southern Iraq, through Iraqi Kurdistan, into Turkey and the Ceyhan terminal, going some way to easing the situation created by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

The IRGC has issued an evacuation order for residents living in the vicinity of five oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar.

Another key figure from the Iranian regime, Esmail Khatib, has been killed, according to the Israeli Ministry of Defence.

A Swedish national has reportedly been executed for espionage in Iran today.

Iran

President Pezeshkian has confirmed that Esmail Khatib, the Iranian intelligence minister, was killed in an Israeli strike overnight, along with other senior officials in the Intelligence Ministry.

The Iranian judiciary has said that a courthouse in Larestan was targeted in an air strike, killing and injuring civilians. A strike on other residential areas of Dorud city in Larestan has killed seven and injured over 50.

A state news agency has reported that Iranian security has arrested over 100 people, dismantled several "royalist cells" and arrested four alleged US spies. The truth behind these claims is unclear. A Swedish national was executed for espionage today.

State media have reported that natural gas facilities associated with the South Pars field offshore have been attacked: a fire at the facility has been brought under control, no casualties have been reported. Israeli media has reported that the Israeli Air Force has conducted strikes on gas infrastructure in Bushehr province. The Iranian military has said that attacks on Iranian gas facilities are a “war crime” and has expressed its intention to respond by targeting additional “enemy infrastructure”.

US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard made a statement today that Iran’s nuclear programme was destroyed by the June 2025 strikes, and there has been no evidence since that Tehran has been rebuilding its enrichment capabilities.

Israel

Israeli air defence systems have intercepted a fresh wave of missiles launched from Iran.

Regional

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has issued an evacuation threat for people living near oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar, specifically: Saudi Arabia’s Samref Refinery and Jubail Petrochemical Complex, the UAE’s Al Hasan Gas Field, and petrochemical plants and a refinery in Qatar.

Despite the earlier rejection of President Trump’s appeal, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte has said this afternoon that NATO allies are discussing collectively how the Strait of Hormuz could be reopened.

Lebanon

The Israeli military has reportedly launched drones on Burj Qalaouiyah in southern Lebanon, killing one.

The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) has admitted to wounding three Ghanaian UN peacekeepers last week, when an Israeli tank fired on the UN location.

The IDF has claimed it has been attacking petrol stations owned by Al-Amana due to the latter’s supposed affiliation with Hezbollah. It has also hit branches of Al-Qard Al-Hasan that it says have been funding Hezbollah.

Turkey

The Turkish Ministry of Defence has said that NATO is deploying another US air defence system to the province of Adana to protect troops at the Incirlik Air Base: Turkey lacks its own air defences, and is seeking support against any further missiles from Iran.

Iraq

With international assistance, Baghdad has reached a deal with Ankara and Erbil to allow oil exports through Turkey's Ceyhan terminal, helping to ease some pressure on Iraq's oil-producing provinces after the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The arrangement is expected to allow 250,000bpd crude.

The headquarters of the Tehran-backed Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) was targeted in western Iraq today.

Qatar

The Qatari government has criticised the Israeli attack on the offshore South Pars field, saying that it is a dangerous and irresponsible escalation.

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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