

THE TRIVIUM REPORT

Clear-eyed, historically grounded analysis that challenges official narratives and connects complex geopolitical events to real-world consequences for ordinary people.



Insights

- Mojtaba Khamenei
- Family and National Loss
- US-Israeli Planning Fail
- Iran's Responses

On U.S. Leadership:

"We have a war with great danger and complexity, and we have a president that is, in my view, mentally unhinged".

On the U.S.-Israel Action in Iran

"This is a joint Israel-US madness. The US wants to rule the world, and Israel wants to rule its region, the Middle East, and they partner together".

On Global Consequences

"The world will pay a fearsome price for this delusion... It's a kind of mass murder of civilians by Israel and the United States. This is shocking, actually".

Jeffrey Sachs



Cartoon by Bill Bramhall

Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei: From Shadow to Supreme Leader

- Who is Mojtaba Khamenei
- Family losses from US-Israeli strikes
- Iran's national trauma and war strategy
- US and Israeli planning failures
- Iranian targeting of US military assets
- Historical record of Western violence
- Iran's war objectives

Who Is Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei?

Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei, is 56 years old, is Iran's new Supreme Leader; a cleric and political figure who spent decades operating behind the scenes before being thrust into the highest office in the Islamic Republic under the most brutal circumstances imaginable.

On March 8, 2026, the Assembly of Experts selected Mojtaba to succeed his father, Ali Khamenei, who was killed in joint US/Israeli airstrikes on February 28, 2026. The younger Khamenei never held formal government office, rarely appeared in public, and is widely described as a behind-the-scenes power broker with close ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and conservative clerical networks.

Analysts across the political spectrum note that Mojtaba is viewed by many insiders as more hardline than his father and strongly committed to preserving the Islamic Republic's core system, with an emphasis on centralized authority vested in the Supreme Leader's office

State media and allied commentators are simultaneously trying to present him as a figure who can "bring solutions" to the severe hardship Iranians face under war and sanctions, even as his ascent is contested by some voices who see him as the embodiment of dynastic succession in a supposedly revolutionary system.

Mojtaba's path to power is inseparable from the catastrophic violence that cleared it. His father, mother, wife, son, siblings, and extended family members were killed in a coordinated campaign of assassination that was framed by Washington and Tel Aviv as "pre-emptive self-defense. For Mojtaba, the ascension to Supreme Leader is not a political triumph—it is a baptism in blood, conducted by the United States and Israel, that has left him personally shattered and ideologically hardened

The Family Members the US and Israel Killed

Open sources do not give a single, fully consistent master list, but across Iranian state-linked media (especially Fars News Agency, which is closely tied to the IRGC) and international reporting, you can reconstruct a core set of named, killed relatives plus some additional, less-precisely dated losses.

Named and Clearly Specified Close Relatives (Confirmed Dates)

The following family members of Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei were killed in the US–Israeli strikes, with dates tied primarily to the massive February 28, 2026, bombardment of his father's compound in Tehran

1. Ali Hosseini Khamenei – Father

- Position: Supreme Leader of Iran until his death.
- Date killed: **February 28, 2026**, in US–Israeli airstrikes on his compound in Tehran.

2. Mansoureh Khojasteh Bagherzadeh – Mother

- Relation: Wife of Ali Khamenei, mother of Mojtaba.
- Date died: **March 2, 2026**, reported to have succumbed to injuries sustained in the February 28 strikes.

3. Zahra Haddad-Adel – Wife

- Relation: Daughter-in-law of Ali Khamenei and widely identified as Mojtaba's spouse.
- Date killed: **February 28, 2026**, Fars refers to a daughter-in-law killed in the compound strike; outlets such as Money control and NDTV identify her as Zahra Haddad-Adel.

4. Unnamed son of Mojtaba Khamenei – Son

- Relation: Grandson of Ali Khamenei, son of Mojtaba and Zahra Haddad-Adel.
- Date killed: **February 28, 2026**, described by Fars as a grandson (son of Mojtaba and Zahra) killed alongside them; NDTV packages this as "one of his two sons."

5. Hoda Khamenei – Sister

- Relation: Daughter of Ali Khamenei, Mojtaba's sister.
- Date killed: **February 28, 2026**, cited by Fars among family members killed in the compound strike.

6. **Mesbah Bagheri Kani** – Brother-in-law

- Relation: Son-in-law of Ali Khamenei, husband of one of his daughters.
- Date killed: **February 28, 2026**, reported by Iranian media and repeated in international reporting as among those killed in the same attack.

7. **Unnamed sibling of Zahra Mohammadi Golpayegani** – Niece or nephew

- Relation: Another grandchild of Ali Khamenei, sibling of Zahra, thus Mojtaba's niece or nephew.
- Date killed: **February 28, 2026**, listed by Fars as "her sibling" killed in the same strike.

8. **Zahra Mohammadi Golpayegani** – Niece

- Relation: 14-month-old granddaughter of Ali Khamenei, child of Boshra Khamenei and Mohammad Mohammadi Golpayegani; Mojtaba's niece.
- Date killed: **February 28, 2026**, described by Fars and others as a grandchild killed in the bombing.

The Toll

At minimum, Mojtaba has lost: both parents, his wife, one son, at least one sister, a brother-in-law, and at least two young nieces or nephews—almost an entire nuclear family and several close extended relatives—in strikes led by the United States and Israel.

These are not "collateral damage." These are targeted killings of civilian family members in a residential compound, carried out by the world's most advanced militaries, with full knowledge of who lived there.

How Mojtaba's Tragedy Connects to Iran's National Trauma

The scale of Mojtaba's personal losses intersects with a much broader civilian trauma inside Iran: mass casualties from bombing, economic chaos, and a pervasive fear that the state itself is under existential attack.

Reports describe thousands of Iranians displaced or injured, critical infrastructure destroyed, and a sense that the whole country has become a battlefield, especially after direct strikes on Tehran, Isfahan, Tabriz, and key military and industrial sites. One of the early strikes killed more than 160 schoolgirls at an elementary school near Bandar Abbas—an incident both Israel and the US have deflected or promised to "investigate."

In that context, Mojtaba's family tragedy functions on several levels within Iranian society and state messaging:

1. **Martyr-Family Narrative**

Iranian state media can and do cast his relatives—including a 14-month-old granddaughter and his own son—as martyrs of US–Israeli aggression, aligning the leader's suffering with that of ordinary families who have lost loved ones.

The message is simple and powerful: *The new Supreme Leader has paid the same price you have paid. He buried his parents, his wife, and his child. He is not asking you to sacrifice what he has not sacrificed himself.*

2. **Legitimacy in Wartime**

A leader whose own family has been hit can claim more credibility when he calls for endurance, sacrifice, or retaliation, because he can say he is paying the same price as the people he is asking to fight and die.

This is not propaganda in the sense of fabrication—it is the weaponization of a real and profound personal loss for political and strategic purposes.

3. Hardening of Positions

For someone already close to the IRGC and security apparatus, the killing of parents, wife, and child by foreign powers is likely to reinforce a no-compromise stance and deep suspicion of any US- or Israeli-linked initiative.

Analysts already describe Mojtaba as highly resistant to concessions and deeply committed to the survival of the Islamic Republic as a political and ideological project. The obliteration of his family has almost certainly hardened that commitment into something closer to existential resolve.

4. Public Response: Polarized but United by Humiliation

Among ordinary Iranians, reactions are mixed and polarized: some rally around the flag and the narrative of national victimhood; others resent their leadership for exposing them to yet another catastrophic war while still recognizing the brutality of external attacks.

Either way, the sense of collective humiliation and anger at foreign powers is real, and Mojtaba's story is being woven directly into that emotional fabric by state messaging. Younger urban Iranians who have no love for the Islamic Republic can still be outraged that a superpower and its regional ally killed a baby, a mother, and schoolgirls in the name of "pre-emptive defense."

Iran Will Not End This War—Because the US and Israel Launched It as Regime Change

The 2026 war began when the US and Israel launched extensive strikes across Iran on February 28, targeting leadership, air defenses, missile forces, nuclear-related sites, and industrial facilities.

US officials gave a shifting set of objectives: pre-empt an "imminent threat," degrade Iran's missile and military capabilities, prevent nuclear weapons, protect US interests, and, in some formulations, bring about regime change. The operation was dubbed "Epic Fury" and framed by Washington as pre-emptive self-defense.

From Iran's perspective, this is not a limited "surgical" operation but an existential attack intended to topple the Islamic Republic; Tehran therefore frames its response as a defensive war that cannot be ended on US–Israeli terms.

Analysts and US media summarizing Iranian strategy emphasize that Iran's leadership aims to **survive, impose costs, and force the US to declare victory and leave**, not to achieve battlefield victory in conventional terms.

Iran has signaled several red lines that make a quick end unlikely:

- Survival of the Islamic Republic and central state institutions.
- Retention of a deterrent missile and drone capability.
- Ability to continue supporting its regional networks (Hezbollah, Iraqi militias, etc.), which it sees as defense in depth.

Under Mojtaba, who comes in with both ideological commitment and personal losses, the system has even less incentive to yield to demands framed as surrender or regime change.

The Iranian state and population have now been placed in a position where compromise with the United States and Israel looks like submission to the powers that killed their leader, his family, and thousands of their citizens. That is not a position from which nations negotiate—it is a position from which they fight to the end.

US and Israeli Planning: The "Limited War" Illusion

The early days of the conflict already show tension between maximalist objectives and inadequate planning for blowback:

The US and Israel struck **thousands of targets** in Iran in the first days, attempting a "decapitation and disarmament" campaign against leadership, security forces, missile infrastructure, and defense industries.

At the same time, reporting highlights **diverging endgames**: Israel pushes for breaking the Iranian regime and crippling its long-term capabilities, while the US is more sensitive to escalation risks, global oil prices, and domestic political costs.

This combination—very broad target sets, very ambitious goals, and limited public clarity—suggests serious underestimation of Iran's capacity to retaliate regionally and to absorb punishment while still functioning.

Donald Trump went into the Iran war with a short, shifting timeline and no coherent endgame, and the gap between his rhetoric and reality has exposed deep chaos inside his administration. Early on, he and the Pentagon talked about a 10–15-day window to "force a deal" or "eliminate the leadership," framing the war almost as a sharp shock. Within days of the February 28 strikes he publicly described the conflict as projected to last "four to five weeks," while also saying the US could extend operations "far longer" if needed.

By the first week of March, officials and leaks were already talking about operations stretching into late summer or beyond, with Trump saying there would be "no time limits" and hinting at participating in choosing Iran's next leader—classic mission creep.

Inside the administration, reporting and senators' briefings describe a war launched without a clear legal or strategic framework, shifting justifications (from "imminent threat" to long-term danger to regime-change hints), and a decision-making circle essentially narrowed to Trump and a few loyalists. Senior military and intelligence officials warned that escalation and regional blowback would be hard to control, but Trump pushed ahead, while Congress and allies complained they did not understand his objectives or exit plan.

The fact that Iranian strikes have already effectively hit key US-linked assets (discussed below) undercuts the idea that these were risk-free blows to a passive adversary.

Iranian Military Tactics: Targeting the "Eyes" of the US Military

Iran's retaliation has focused on economically vital infrastructure and on degrading the US and allied military's ability to see and intercept attacks.

Key elements of Iran's strategy include:

- Targeting oil and gas infrastructure in neighboring states and the Strait of Hormuz to raise global energy prices and pressure the US and its partners to seek a ceasefire.
- Strikes on US missile-defense and radar assets across the region to blind or degrade their air-defense umbrella.

Specific Radars and High-Priced Military Targets Destroyed

Open reporting points to several concrete systems and sites Iran has damaged or targeted:

THAAD Radar in Jordan

Satellite imagery shows the radar system associated with a US THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missile battery in Jordan was hit and apparently destroyed in the early days of Iranian retaliation.

THAAD radars are high-value X-band systems critical for tracking ballistic missiles and cueing interceptors, so disabling one significantly reduces coverage in its sector. Each THAAD radar unit costs approximately \$574 million, and the loss of even one creates a major gap in the US regional missile-defense architecture.

US-Manufactured Early-Warning Radar in the UAE

CNN's analysis indicates buildings housing similar US-made early-warning radar systems were struck at two locations in the United Arab Emirates; the full extent of radar damage is unclear, but infrastructure was hit.

Other Radar and Communications Facilities Across the Arabian Peninsula

US officials acknowledge that Iranian strikes damaged communications, radar, and intelligence equipment at multiple US-linked bases, aiming to isolate these installations from external support.

Broader "Eyes and Ears" Network

Broadcasts and analysis describe Iran targeting the "eyes" of the US military—early-warning radars, surveillance assets, and key command nodes—rather than trying to sink carrier strike groups head-on.

Meanwhile, US and Israeli strikes have repeatedly hit **Shiraz Electronics Industries (SEI)**, a major producer of military electronics, radars, and missile guidance components for Iran, suggesting both sides are locked in a contest over who can degrade the other's sensing and guidance networks faster.

The Lancet Study and Western Deaths from Interventions

A controversial 2023 analysis published in *The Lancet* estimated that US and European military interventions and sanctions contributed to approximately 38 million deaths in countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America from 1970 to 2021.

While this figure is disputed and not mainstream consensus, there is broad documentation that US and European wars, sanctions, and covert interventions in places like Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and across Latin America have caused very large civilian death tolls and long-term devastation.

Israeli Conduct: Gaza and the Genocide Question

Israel, for its part, has waged intensive campaigns in Lebanon, Gaza, and Syria that have killed many tens of thousands of civilians over decades, and the current war in Gaza has drawn strong accusations—including from UN experts and human-rights organizations—that Israel's conduct may amount to genocide or at least genocidal acts.

Israel's long-term policy of occupation, settlement expansion, and repeated large-scale assaults has helped entrench chronic instability across the region and fed the very network of armed groups it now says must be destroyed.

The Asymmetry Is Overwhelming

In this light, Iranian state narratives that depict the US and Israel as aggressive and disproportionate actors are not purely propaganda; they are anchored in a historical record of Western and Israeli campaigns that have imposed vastly greater total damage in the Middle East and beyond than anything Iran has done directly to the US homeland.

The number of Americans killed directly by Iran itself (not proxy groups) is extremely small—essentially limited to a handful of incidents such as clashes with Iranian forces in the Gulf and possibly the 1983 Marine barracks bombing in Beirut if you attribute it directly to Iran rather than to Hezbollah.

Most US casualties linked to Iran in US rhetoric involve **proxies** (Hezbollah, Iraqi militias, Houthis) in complex conflict environments where responsibility is politically contested.

The asymmetry is so overwhelming that it makes US claims about Iran as an existential threat look absurd to anyone with even a basic grasp of the historical record.

Regional Instability: Made in Washington and Tel Aviv

The instability that defines the modern Middle East is not the product of Iranian aggression—it is the product of decades of US and Israeli intervention, occupation, regime change, and support for authoritarian allies.

The 1953 CIA-MI6 coup that overthrew Mohammad Mossadegh and installed the Shah as an autocratic, pro-Western ruler who granted major oil concessions to US and British companies set the template: when a Middle Eastern country tries to control its own resources or chart an independent path, Washington intervenes.

The subsequent decades of US support for the Shah's brutal SAVAK secret police, the backing of Saddam Hussein's war against Iran (including his use of chemical weapons), the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the destruction of Libya, and unconditional support for Israeli occupation and settlement expansion have created a region defined by violence, instability, and deep mistrust of Western intentions.

Iran's regional network—Hezbollah, Iraqi militias, the Houthis, and others—did not emerge in a vacuum. It emerged as a response to Israeli occupation, US invasions, and the collapse of state structures across the region due to Western intervention.

Iran's Main Goals in the Current War

Analysts synthesizing Iranian behavior and official statements describe Tehran's goals in the 2026 war roughly as:

- **Survival of the regime and core institutions.** Iran's first objective is to prevent the destruction or collapse of the Islamic Republic and keep its governing structures intact, even in weakened form.
- **Restoration of deterrence.** By demonstrating a credible ability to hit US bases, regional infrastructure, and Israel's strategic assets, Iran wants to raise the future cost of any attack to a level that discourages repetition.
- **Regional signal: punishment and resilience.** Iran seeks to show its allies and adversaries that it can take massive hits—including the killing of its Supreme Leader and his family—and still coordinate substantial retaliatory strikes and keep its network alive.
- **Economic and political pressure.** By targeting oil and gas infrastructure and shipping lanes, Iran aims to create enough global economic pain that key players (especially in Europe and the Gulf) push Washington and Tel Aviv toward de-escalation and concessions.

- **Narrative victory.** At home and across the region, Iran wants to frame this war as another episode in a long story of Western aggression and resistance, using Mojtaba's family losses as a potent symbol of shared sacrifice.

Given Mojtaba's background and trauma, it is reasonable to expect a leadership that doubles down on those goals rather than seeking accommodation with the US or Israel, at least in the near term.

Conclusion: Iran Will Not Submit

This war is not winnable for the United States and Israel.

Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei is now the living embodiment of Iranian resistance. He has buried his father, his mother, his wife, his son, his sister, and his nieces and nephews. He has nothing left to lose, and everything to avenge.

The United States and Israel have not broken Iran—they have hardened it. They have not isolated Iran—they have driven it into the arms of Russia, China, and a Global South that is sick of Western domination. They have not weakened Iran—they have given it a leader whose personal trauma aligns perfectly with the national narrative of martyrdom and resistance.

No matter how much the West thinks they can control the Iranian population and leadership, the Iranian population will determine their future.

Jeff Fitchett B.A., FMA, CIM

triviumanalytics.ca

jeff@triviumanalytics.ca

References

- [1] White House. (2026). *US casualties from Iranian and Iranian-backed actions*. Official White House fact sheet. Retrieved March 12, 2026.
- [2] National Security Archive. (2013, August 18). *CIA confirms role in 1953 Iran coup; US support for Iraq's chemical weapons program*. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB435/>
- [3] *The Lancet*. (2023). *Estimated deaths from Western interventions, 1970–2021*. Analysis published in medical journal; disputed by some scholars but widely cited in anti-war discourse.
- [4] United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2024). *Reports on Israeli conduct in Gaza and occupied territories*. Multiple UN rapporteurs and human-rights organizations have raised concerns about potential genocidal acts.
- [5] Democracy Now! (2007, March 2). *Gen. Wesley Clark weighs presidential bid: Discusses Iraq war, new Pentagon policy on homosexuality* [Video]. https://www.democracynow.org/2007/3/2/gen_wesley_clark_weighs_presidential_bid
- [6] Britannica. (n.d.). *Mohammad Mosaddegh; Operation Ajax; Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi*. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved March 12, 2026.
- [7] CIA World Factbook; Library of Congress country studies; academic sources on Iranian ethnic composition and