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## 9 killed as Iranian missile destroys synagogue, smashes bomb shelter in Beit Shemesh

*Over 40 more injured as impact strikes residential area in city west of Jerusalem; IDF investigating failure to intercept missile and integrity of shelter*

By [Emanuel Fabian](#), [Lazar Berman](#) and [Charlie Summers](#)

Today, 4:55 pm Updated at 8:29 pm

Footage posted to social media shows the moment of impact of a deadly Iranian missile strike in Beit Shemesh, Israel, March 1, 2026. (X, used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law); Emergency personnel seen operating at the scene (Reuters/MDA/Ahikam Seri/AFPTV/AFP) [Go to website for video rdb](#)

**Nine people were killed and more than 40 were injured in Beit Shemesh, near Jerusalem, on Sunday afternoon by a direct Iranian ballistic missile impact.**

**The missile struck a residential area in the city, destroying a synagogue and causing extensive damage to a public bomb shelter beneath it and surrounding homes.**

**The Magen David Adom ambulance service said it declared the deaths of eight victims at the scene and took 28 others to hospitals, two in serious condition. The death of the ninth victim was declared a short time later.**

**Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek Medical Center said it was treating six people, including a four-year-old boy who was admitted in moderate condition, while others were evacuated to the Terem Emergency Medical Center in Beit Shemesh and the capital's Hadassah University Hospitals in Mount Scopus and Ein Kerem.**

**The military dispatched search and rescue forces and medics to the scene, along with a helicopter to assist with evacuating the injured.**

Footage showed the moment of the impact just before 2 p.m., after sirens rang out across much of the country.

The IDF said that the failure to intercept the missile was under investigation by the Israeli Air Force. Air defense systems were activated in the area, but the interceptors failed to shoot down the missile for as-yet unclear reasons.

The Home Front Command was also investigating the circumstances, including the integrity of the shelter, which directly sustained the impact of the estimated 500-kilogram warhead on the Iranian ballistic missile.



**Rescue workers and military personnel operate at the scene where several people were killed in an Iranian missile strike in Beit Shemesh, March 1, 2026. (AP Photo/Leo Correa)**

Jerusalem District police chief Deputy Commissioner Avshalom Peled said that "as far as I know," the majority of those killed in the missile impact had been inside the public shelter.

"It was likely a direct impact on the shelter and most, if not all of those killed, were in there," said Peled.

He noted that while in some circumstances, shelters are unable to withstand the force of a direct ballistic missile impact, they protect those inside in the vast majority of

cases.

However later reports suggested that most of those killed had not been inside the shelter.

The missile impact in Beit Shemesh was the deadliest in Israel during the current conflict with Iran. The deadliest strike in Israel during the 12-day war with Iran in June 2025 also killed nine people, when a missile struck a Bat Yam apartment building.

## IDF assesses Iran has some 2,500 ballistic missiles

Less than 36 hours into the renewed fighting, dubbed Operation Roaring Lion by Israel, the IDF said Sunday it assesses that Iran currently possesses some 2,500 ballistic missiles.



“upward trend.”

Ahead of the war in June 2025, the IDF said it identified efforts by Iran to significantly accelerate its production rate of ballistic missiles and increase its stockpile from around 3,000 to 8,000 within two years.

During that conflict, Iran launched more than 500 missiles at Israel, with the Israeli military reported destroying hundreds of missiles in strikes and preventing the production of 1,500 additional missiles by targeting manufacturing infrastructure.

*The scene where a ballistic missile fired from Iran hit Beit Shemesh, March 1, 2026. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)*

The IDF said that in recent months, Iran has been investing significant efforts to restore its missile production capabilities, manufacturing dozens per month, with its production rate on a

“The possession of missiles by a regime that intends to destroy the State of Israel constitutes an existential threat,” the IDF said, adding that it “will not allow the Iranian terror regime to restore its military capabilities, and will continue to act to eliminate any emerging threat against the citizens of the State of Israel, anywhere and at any time.”

The scene of a lethal Iranian missile impact in Beit Shemesh on March 1, 2026. (United Hatzalah)

**‘If someone rises to kill you, rise to kill him first’**

Shortly before the impact in Beit Shemesh, a range of politicians gathered outside the site in Tel Aviv where a rocket struck Saturday night, [killing a home health aide](#) and wounding

dozens.

Speaking at the site early Sunday afternoon, President Isaac Herzog thanked US President Donald Trump “for his courage” and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “for the correct decision” in launching the strikes on Iran.

*President Isaac Herzog at the scene of a deadly Iranian missile strike in Tel Aviv, March 1, 2026. (Kobi Gideon/GPO)*

“We are united at this moment to defeat the enemy and bring about change,” he said.

Israel is at war, the president stressed, “and in war, you must first take care of the home front and protect it, and second, attack and act with full force to defeat the enemy.”

“If someone rises to kill you, rise to kill him first,” he said, quoting the Talmud.

*Fire and smoke rise following the impact of a ballistic missile fired from Iran in central Tel Aviv, February 28, 2026. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)*

The president said Israel is not experiencing “an easy time, but it is a time in which we can see, generations ahead, how much this campaign is bringing change.

Generations ahead — because the evil empire in Iran has as its sole objective the destruction of Israel.”

“This is a top priority on its agenda,” he said.

“Therefore, it is our duty to be strong, resilient, and



steadfast. We will get through this and move forward, and our children and grandchildren will one day be grateful for these moments.”

At the same site, former prime minister Naftali Bennett, considered Netanyahu’s main rival in elections this year, stressed his support “for the government and its leader.”

He also said that while much of the world routinely denounces what Israel does, even critics of Israel know deep down that “Israel is doing their job, in eliminating the world’s biggest terrorist dictators.”



*Former prime minister Naftali Bennett at the scene where a ballistic missile fired from Iran hit Tel Aviv, March 1, 2026. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)*

“I’ve never been prouder to be an Israeli,” he said, “and we will never apologize for what we are doing. I give my full backing to the government and its leader. There is no left and no right.” He also hailed Israel’s military, noting that “the entire people of Israel stand behind the [air force] pilots.”

Bennett said Israel is stronger and safer “because Israel did not wait any longer” to target Iran. He lamented that Israel “for decades” followed a doctrine of “containment and waiting.” But now, he said, it is “acting on every front to harm our enemies.”

“We all proceed together” until the threats to Israel are dealt with, he added. “Now it’s the Iranian people’s turn to rise up and free itself. The one who must remove the chains of oppression is the Iranian people itself.”

Also speaking next to the missile impact in Tel Aviv, National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir vowed that law enforcement will crack down on those who incite against Israel.

Speaking to the press alongside Israel Police chief Danny Levy and Tel Aviv District commander Haim Sargaroff, Ben Gvir praised the killing of Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in the ongoing joint Israeli-US operation.



*National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir meets with police before speaking to the press at the scene of an Iranian missile strike in Tel Aviv on March 1, 2026. (Courtesy)*

“The end of an era, we’ve lopped off the head of the snake,” he said, hailing Netanyahu for the waves of strikes. He then turned his focus inward, warning that police will crack down on those within Israel who “incite” against the state.

“We have a very determined police force; anyone who raises his head to try to incite against the State of Israel, anyone who raises his head to try and harm the State of Israel, we will thrash him, we will tear his head off,” he said.

He further called on Israelis to carry firearms with them: “I call on citizens to bear arms, those who have a firearm, to bear it.”

“At the end of the day, these Nazis want to destroy us all,” Ben Gvir said. “They want to eliminate all of us, and we will eliminate them one by one.”

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/nine-people-killed-in-iranian-missile-strike-on-residential-area-in-beit-shemesh/>

## **WATCH: Cluster munitions seemingly used during latest Iranian missile barrage against Israel**

Following the barrage, Magen David Adom said its paramedics were dispatched to sites of reported missile impacts in central Israel.

*IRANIAN CLUSTER munitions reportedly filmed over Israeli territory. (Credit: Section 27a Copyright Act)*

By [JERUSALEM POST STAFF](#) MARCH 1, 2026 21:55 Updated: MARCH 1, 2026 23:32 [Go to website for video rdb](#)

**Missiles using cluster munitions were reportedly seen over central Israel during the latest barrage from Iran on Sunday evening, according to footage circulating online.**

**Following the barrage, Magen David Adom said its paramedics were dispatched to sites of reported missile impacts in central Israel.**

**Police officers are working to isolate one of the impact sites in central Israel, and have asked the public to stay away from the area.**

A 45-year-old man has been evacuated by MDA to [Sheba Medical Center](#) with a facial injury, MDA added, and other medical teams are en route to provide care to others who were lightly injured running to shelter. Fire and rescue services advised residents of nearby buildings to remain inside their homes until firefighting operations are complete.



### **Five injured in Jerusalem from Iranian missile salvo**

In a later blast on Sunday, MDA paramedics announced they were treating five people for injuries in Jerusalem.

### **Nine killed in separate missile hit in Beit Shemesh**

In a separate incident on Sunday afternoon, an [Iranian ballistic missile impact killed nine people](#) and wounded over 45 people, including several children, in the Beit Shemesh area, west of Jerusalem.

The site of the Iranian missile impact in Beit Shemesh. March 1, 2026. (credit: SETH J. FRANTZMAN)

Israeli authorities later named three of the victims of the attack, including a mother and daughter.

At least four apartment buildings were destroyed in

the attack, Israeli media reported, adding that the Iranian missile reportedly penetrated through a shelter in the vicinity. *This is a developing story.* <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-888437>

## **3 American soldiers killed, 5 seriously injured in war with Iran — US military**

***Central Command announces first US casualties; Saudi Arabia downs Iranian missiles as explosions reported over Dubai, Doha; 2 injured by debris from intercepted drone in Abu Dhabi***

*By Emanuel Fabian and Agencies Today, 8:42 pm*



*This image provided by US Central Command shows a F/A-18E Super Hornet launching from the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) for a mission in support of Operation Epic Fury, February 28, 2026. (US Navy via AP)*

**Three American soldiers have been killed, and five have been seriously wounded in the ongoing conflict with Iran, the US Central Command said Sunday, announcing the first US casualties in the conflict.**

**The United States and Israel launched massive bombardments against Iran and killed its supreme leader Saturday, with the attacks continuing on**

**Sunday.**

**CENTCOM did not provide further details on the circumstances of the deaths and injuries of the US service members.**

**“The situation is fluid, so out of respect for the families, we will withhold additional information, including the identities of our fallen warriors, until 24 hours after next of kin have been notified,” it said.**

Iran has targeted American military facilities in the Middle East with ballistic missiles and drones over the past day in response to the US-Israeli bombardments. It has also fired missiles and drones at Israel, killing 10 people and injuring scores.

“Several others sustained minor shrapnel injuries and concussions and are in the process of being returned to duty,” CENTCOM said of the US casualties, adding that “major combat operations continue and our response effort is ongoing.”

However, it denied claims made by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps that the American aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln was struck with ballistic missiles.

“The Lincoln was not hit. The missiles launched didn’t even come close,” CENTCOM said. “The Lincoln continues to launch aircraft in support of CENTCOM’s relentless campaign to defend the American people by eliminating threats from the Iranian regime.”



*Illustrative: This undated photo provided by the US Navy on April 13, 2022, shows the USS Abraham Lincoln, and other warships, sailing in formation during a US-Japan bilateral exercise at the Sea of Japan. (US Navy via AP/ File)*

The IRGC had claimed earlier that “the US aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln was struck by four ballistic missiles.”

Separately, CENTCOM confirmed using B-2 stealth bombers to strike underground Iranian ballistic missile facilities.

“Last night, US B-2 stealth bombers, armed with 2,000-pound bombs, struck Iran’s hardened ballistic missile facilities,” it said.

A US defense official told Fox News that four B-2 bombers flew round-trip from the US and “dropped dozens of 2,000-lb bombs on underground ballistic missile sites in Iran.”

The CENTCOM statement came after analysts monitoring open-source flight tracking data revealed that B-2 bombers had been used in recent strikes on Iran.

The US used B-2s, advanced aircraft known for delivering huge bunker-buster bombs, during strikes on Iranian nuclear sites at the end of the previous round of hostilities between Israel and Iran last June.

### **Iran continues to pound Gulf countries**

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia intercepted Iranian missiles targeting Riyadh’s international airport and the Prince Sultan Airbase, which houses US military personnel, a Gulf source briefed on the matter told AFP.

“Air defenses successfully intercepted Iranian missiles near Riyadh airport and Prince Sultan Airbase on Sunday afternoon,” the source said, requesting anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, and adding that the interception did not disrupt navigation or cause any human or material losses.

An eyewitness near the airport said they “saw and heard the air defense intercept the missile in the sky.”



Residents and AFP correspondents earlier reported hearing explosions in eastern Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia’s foreign ministry said it summoned the Iranian ambassador.

“Foreign Ministry summons the Iranian ambassador to the Kingdom in response to Iran’s brazen attacks that targeted the Kingdom and a number of brotherly countries,” the ministry said in a statement on its X account.

*Motorists drive past a plume of smoke rising from a reported Iranian strike in the industrial district of Doha, Qatar, on March 1, 2026. (Mahmud HAMS / AFP)*

Since Saturday morning, Iran has launched wide-ranging strikes across the region, targeting

military bases but also civilian infrastructure in the Gulf.

Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, and Manama airports were targeted by attacks, with authorities reporting one death in the Emirati capital in the “incident” at the facility.

Saudi Arabia houses US bases and personnel, though the bigger such facilities are located in Bahrain and Qatar.

US President Donald Trump has said the goal of the military campaign is to destroy Iran’s military capacity, but has also [indicated that the goal](#) is regime change.

Prior to the escalation, Saudi Arabia had said it would not allow its territory, air, or waters to be used to strike Iran, its former arch-foe, but those assurances fell on deaf ears.

Trump’s decision to strike Iran came after Saudi Arabia’s de facto leader privately lobbied him repeatedly to make the move, the [Washington Post](#) reported.

“Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman made multiple private phone calls to Trump over the past month advocating a US attack, despite his public support for a diplomatic solution,” the outlet reported, citing four unnamed people familiar with the matter.



*US President Donald Trump stands with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on his visit to the White House, November 18, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)*

As Iran's retaliatory strikes widened Sunday, they reverberated across Gulf Arab states, with loud blasts heard in Dubai and the Qatari capital Doha, the Bahraini capital Manama, and Oman, which was hit for the first time.

Debris from an intercepted drone damaged an Abu Dhabi complex housing the Israeli embassy and several other international missions, causing minor injuries to a woman and her child, Abu Dhabi's state media office said.

Debris from the drone fell against the facade of the Etihad Towers complex after an interception that caused loud sounds heard across the emirate, the media office said.

Dubai's international airport, its landmark Burj Al Arab hotel, and the man-made Palm Jumeirah Island [all suffered damage overnight](#), as did Abu Dhabi's international airport.

Thick black plumes of smoke continued to rise from the Jebel Ali port area of Dubai, where one of the berths caught fire Sunday because of debris from an intercepted missile.

Dubai is the biggest tourism and trade hub in the Middle East, and its airport is one of the world's busiest travel hubs.

In Oman, the Duqm commercial port was targeted by two drones, wounding one worker, the state news agency said.



*The Etihad Towers, left, are lit in the blue hues of the United Nations' logo in celebration of the UN's 70th anniversary, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, October 24, 2015. (Kamran Jebreili/AP/File)*

Qatar's interior ministry said on Sunday that it was responding to a limited fire in an industrial zone, after debris fell from an intercepted missile.

As the conflict's impact on key regional aviation and trade hubs increased, the Dutch arm of Air France-KLM said flights to and from Dubai, Dammam, and Riyadh due to take off over the weekend were canceled.

KLM last week announced it was suspending its Amsterdam-Tel Aviv service amid fear that a war with Iran was imminent.

The carrier said it was monitoring developments closely and will update its schedule as needed, and passengers on affected flights will be rebooked once operations resume. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/3-american-soldiers-killed-5-seriously-injured-in-war-with-iran-us-military/>

## Trump threatens Iran with force 'never seen before' as missiles bombard Israel for second day

*Iran says Jerusalem and Washington 'will suffer the consequences' after killing of Khamenei, though morning salvos cause little damage; US bases in region, Gulf allies also attacked*

By [Emanuel Fabian](#), [Jacob Magid](#) and [Agencies](#) Today, 11:14 am Updated at 12:37 pm



*The scene where a ballistic missile fired from Iran hit Tel Aviv overnight, causing heavy damage, March 1, 2026. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)*

**US President Donald Trump threatened early Sunday morning to hit Iran with unprecedented force after Tehran warned it would step up attacks in retaliation for the killing of its supreme leader and fired successive volleys of rockets at Israel for a second consecutive day Sunday.**

**In Iran, the Israel Defense Forces continued to carry out strikes on military sites, including a massive blast in Tehran.**

**The army announced that it had dropped over 1,000 bombs in just over 24 hours of attacks that kicked off Saturday morning with a strike that killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other top officials.**

**“Iran just stated that they are going to hit very hard today, harder than they have ever hit before,” Trump wrote on his Truth Social social network. “THEY BETTER NOT DO THAT, HOWEVER, BECAUSE IF THEY DO, WE WILL HIT THEM WITH A FORCE THAT HAS NEVER BEEN SEEN BEFORE!”** (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

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**“Iran just stated that they are going to hit very hard today, harder** than they have ever hit before,” Trump wrote on his Truth Social social network. **“THEY BETTER NOT DO THAT, HOWEVER, BECAUSE IF THEY DO, WE WILL HIT THEM WITH A FORCE THAT HAS NEVER BEEN SEEN BEFORE!”**

His comments came just a few hours after the Iranian regime [confirmed that its](#) longtime leader Khamenei had been killed in a strike on his office early Saturday morning.

Iran’s parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, said Sunday morning in a video carried on state TV that Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have “crossed our red lines” and “will suffer the consequences.”

The elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps vowed in a statement Sunday that Iran’s armed forces would soon retaliate again with the “most ferocious offensive operation in history” against US bases and Israel.

“The hand of revenge of the Iranian nation for a severe, decisive and regrettable punishment for the murderers of the Imam of the Ummah will not let go of them,” the IRGC said in a statement.



*A protester holds a portrait of Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during a protest against US and Israeli attacks on multiple cities across Iran at a bridge leading to the fortified Green Zone where the US embassy is located in Baghdad, Iraq, February 28, 2026. (AP/Hadi Mizban)*

Waves of sirens rang out repeatedly across much of central, southern and northern Israel on Saturday night and Sunday morning as Iran fired ballistic missiles at the country, sending millions of Israelis to shelter. Iran’s state broadcaster said 27 US bases in the region, as well as Israel’s military headquarters and a defense industries complex in Tel Aviv, were among the targets in the new wave of strikes.

There were no reports of impacts in residential areas or direct injuries following the salvos, medics said. Magen David Adom said it treated people lightly hurt by falling while running to bomb shelters.

Police said they received reports of missile and interceptor fragments that landed in the Jerusalem area, and the Fire and Rescue Service said it was responding to a gas leak caused by falling shrapnel in the West Bank.

In contrast to the large barrages fired at Israel during the 12-day war with Iran in June, most salvos Saturday and Sunday have consisted of small number of missiles, usually three at a time, with breaks of a few minutes between each launch, according to the IDF.



***A man takes cover in a public shelter in Tel Aviv as a siren sounds warning of incoming ballistic missiles fired from Iran, March 1, 2026. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)***

The attacks have caused only a small number of injuries, aside from a particularly large barrage of some 20 missiles toward the Tel Aviv area Saturday night in which one projectile managed to evade air defenses, hitting near a residential building and [killing a woman](#).

The slain woman, a foreign caregiver for an elderly woman, did not manage to reach a shelter in time, the military said Sunday after an initial investigation. The woman she was caring for was

extracted by rescue workers from the rubble alive.

The Home Front Command has determined that a complete Iranian ballistic missile — not fragments — struck next to the apartment building, causing extensive damage and a large crater. Dozens more were injured in the strike.



***Fire and smoke rise following the impact of a ballistic missile fired from Iran in central Tel Aviv, February 28, 2026. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)***

Meanwhile, the IDF said it targeted Iran’s ballistic missile and air defense systems in western and central Iran with strikes on around 30 targets Sunday morning.

An enormous explosion rocked Iran’s capital Sunday as the Israeli military said it was targeting the heart of the city. The blast in Tehran sent a huge plume of smoke into the sky and shook the ground.

The military later said it had carried out an airstrike against a “headquarters of the Iranian terror regime” in Tehran, releasing video showing two buildings being

destroyed in blasts.

Defense Minister Israel Katz said midday Sunday that the Israeli Air Force was striking Tehran with “stand-in” munitions, meaning those dropped directly over their targets.

“For the first time in Operation Roaring Lion, air force aircraft are operating in ‘stand-in’ over the skies of Tehran in a powerful strike against regime and repression targets,” Katz wrote on X.

Advertisement

Israeli strikes in Tehran in the past day had used stand-off weapons, which are launched from a distance and generally have smaller warheads. The ability to launch stand-in bombs comes after the military said it established air superiority and “opened the way to Tehran.”



Katz said “continuous powerful strikes” will now take place in Tehran.

***People watch from rooftop as a plume of smoke rises after a strike in Tehran, Iran, March 1, 2026. (AP/Vahid Salemi)***

The IDF said Sunday that Israeli Air Force fighter jets had dropped more than 1,200 pieces of munition during strikes in Iran over the past day.

The Israeli military earlier said some 200 Israeli fighter jets were taking part in the campaign aimed at harming Iran’s ballistic missile and aerial defense systems.

Targets in the Israeli campaign also include Iran’s symbols of government and intelligence targets, according to an official briefed on the operation, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss nonpublic information

on the attack.

In southern Iran, at least 115 people were reported killed when a girls' school was struck, and dozens more were wounded, the local governor told Iranian state TV. US Central Command spokesperson Capt. Tim Hawkins said he was "aware of reports" that a girls' school was struck and that officials were looking into them.

An Iranian diplomat told the United Nations Security Council that hundreds of civilians were killed and wounded in the strikes.

The IDF also confirmed that it killed Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in an airstrike in Tehran Saturday morning.



**Plume of smokes rise from reported explosions in Tehran on March 1, 2026. (ATTA KENARE / AFP)**

"Ali Khamenei was targeted in a precise, large-scale operation carried out by the Israeli Air Force, guided by accurate IDF intelligence, while he was in his central leadership compound in the heart of Tehran, where he was together with additional senior officials," the military said in a statement, after Iran confirmed that Khamenei had been killed.

Defense Minister Israel Katz said Sunday morning that "justice has been served" after the killing of Khamenei.

"He who worked to destroy Israel was destroyed. Justice has been done, and the axis of evil sustained a

crushing blow," he said.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the strikes that killed Iran's supreme leader show that those who harm Americans must pay a price.

"If you kill or threaten Americans anywhere in the world — as Iran has — then we will hunt you down, and we will kill you," Hegseth wrote on X.



**US President Donald Trump looks on as Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth (R) speaks during a cabinet meeting in the Cabinet Room of the White House in Washington, DC, January 29, 2026. (Brendan SMIALOWSKI / AFP)**

Iran also continued to launch attacks on Arab countries in the Gulf region that are considered US allies. Repeated explosions were heard in Dubai as well as in Doha and the Bahraini capital Manama Sunday morning.

Loud explosions were also heard near Erbil airport, which hosts US-led coalition troops in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region. An AFP journalist reported seeing thick black smoke rising from the airport area.

The US military did not report any casualties in the strikes on American bases or targets.

The United Arab Emirates said that at least one person was killed in Abu Dhabi. Two people were also killed in airstrikes on an Iraqi military base housing the powerful pro-Iran group Kataeb Hezbollah, while Qatar said falling missile fragments injured at least eight people.

Smoke poured overnight from US bases in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, home to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet.

In Iran, the Red Crescent said on Saturday strikes had left 201 people dead and injured hundreds more. The Iranian judiciary said one strike that hit a school in the south killed 108 people, although AFP was unable to access the site to verify the toll or the circumstances surrounding the incident.



*Emergency personnel work to extinguish a fire in a building after an Iranian strike in Manama, Bahrain on February 28, 2026. (Fadhel Madan/ AFP)*

The joint US-Israeli operation began Saturday morning with smoke rising over Tehran after strikes that Israel said were preemptive.

Shortly after, Trump announced US combat operations, with the goal of “eliminating imminent threats.” At an emergency UN Security Council meeting, US Ambassador Mike Waltz said the operation was aimed at eliminating Iran’s nuclear capabilities and degrading its military.

Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, the UAE and Israel all closed their airspaces to civilian traffic, at least in part, and multiple airlines canceled flights to the Middle East, sparking chaos for travelers. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-threatens-iran-with-force-never-seen-before-as-missiles-bombard-israel-for-second-day/>

## **‘Freedom, freedom!’: Jubilant crowds across Iran celebrate killing of Khamenei** **Videos from Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Abadan show cheering, impromptu dance parties, fireworks; man shouts ‘hello new world’ as statue of republic founder is toppled in Galleh Dar**

By [Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 4:19 pm

*Iranians take to the streets to celebrate the news of Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s death, in Karaj, February 28, 2026. (Social media, used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law); Iranian regime supporters carry signs as they mourn Khamenei’s death in the streets of Shiraz the following morning. (IRAN PRESS / AFP). [Go to website for video rdb](#)*

*US President Donald Trump announces the US strikes on Iran on February 28, 2026. (Screen capture/Truth Social); Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks to US President Donald Trump regarding the joint strikes (GPO/Avi Ohayon); an image provided by Airbus shows the strike on Khamenei’s compound in Tehran. (Airbus via AP); Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran, June 28, 2024. (AP/Vahid Salemi) [Go to website for video rdb](#)*

**Large crowds of Iranians took to the streets, cheering with joy and playing celebratory music, Saturday night and early Sunday as reports spread that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had been killed.**

Internet and phone service are almost entirely down in Iran, making accounts hard to verify and causing difficulties in assessing how widespread the celebratory sentiment was.

Celebrations in Tehran began shortly after 11 p.m., even before Iranian state television confirmed the killing of Khamenei, who brutally ruled over the country for 36 years.

The [New York Times](#), citing video calls with three residents of Tehran, said that “loud Persian dance music filled the streets. Many residents, from their windows and balconies, joined in a chant of ‘freedom, freedom.’”

The newspaper also published videos — with some individuals’ faces blurred — of celebrations in Abadan, a Kurdish city where many protesters were killed in January — showing men and women cheering and honking their car horns in the middle of the street upon hearing the news.

Fireworks could be seen being launched in videos shared on social media.

Videos posted on social media also showed joy and defiance elsewhere in Iran, with people cheering as a statue was toppled in the city of Dehloran in Ilam province, dancing in the streets of Karaj city, near Tehran in Alborz province, and celebrating in the streets of Izeh in Khuzestan province.

In the town of Galleh Dar in southern Iran, people brought down a monument commemorating Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who founded the Islamic Republic in 1979, a video on social media showed.

“Am I dreaming? Hello to the new world!” a man can be heard shouting in the video, as fires burned on a traffic circle where the monument was toppled, prompting cheers and applause.

Another video showed people celebrating in the town of Lapuee in southern Iran outside the house of a 15-year-old teenager, Pooya Jafari, who was shot dead during anti-government protests in January.

Thousands of Iranians were killed during a brutal crackdown on anti-government protests in January. The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) has recorded more than 7,000 deaths, while warning the full toll is likely far higher.

The killings drew threats from US President Donald Trump that he could order military action against the regime to protect the demonstrators. Both Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have called on protesters to take to the streets at the conclusion of the US-Israeli military operation, to finish the job of toppling the regime.

In Shiraz, people “were abandoning their cars for an impromptu dance party,” according to The New York Times, “whistling, cheering, clapping and screaming with joy.”

And a video from Isfahan showed a jubilant crowd of mostly young men and women, cheering and honking their horns.

A 33-year-old woman from Isfahan said she began crying from a mix of joy and disbelief when she heard Khamenei was dead.

Speaking to Reuters from Iran, she said she joined others dancing in the street to “share my happiness with my people,” expressing hope that his death would mean the end of the Islamic Republic.

She declined to be named for fear of reprisal.

But Atousa Mirzade, a primary school teacher in the central city of Shiraz, said she could not be happy about the country’s leader being killed by a foreign power.

“I also cannot be happy because I don’t know what will happen to our country. We saw what happened in Iraq — chaos and bloodshed. I would prefer the Islamic Republic to that situation.”

Meanwhile, thousands gathered in the center of Tehran to mourn Khamenei’s death, journalists said.

The mourners, dressed mostly in black and some crying, chanted “Death to America” and “Death to Israel” in Enghelab (Revolution) Square, with many waving Iran’s flags and holding photos of Khamenei.

Iranian state television announced a 40-day mourning period and seven public holidays.

University student Hossein Dadbakhsh, 21, in Mashhad, said Iran would avenge its leader.

“I am ready to sacrifice my life for Islam and for my Imam Khamenei. The Zionist regime and Trump will pay a heavy price for the martyrdom of my leader,” he said by phone, his voice trembling with emotion.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/freedom-freedom-jubilant-crowds-across-iran-celebrate-killing-of-khamenei/>

## **UAE extends stranded Israelis’ hotel stays, covers costs as Israel aids tourists at home and abroad**

***Abu Dhabi orders hotels to extend stays for guests unable to depart due to airspace closures and says it will cover the costs, while Israel’s Tourism Ministry activates emergency operations to house evacuees and assist tourists seeking to leave***

[\*Itamar Eichner, ynet Global\*](#) | 12:11

**Abu Dhabi has instructed hotels in the emirate to extend the stays of tourists who cannot leave because of the closure of airspace, announcing that local authorities will cover the costs.**

**The decision comes as about 500 Israelis are stranded in the United Arab Emirates amid a widening regional escalation. Yossi Shelley, Israel’s ambassador to the UAE, updated local authorities on the number of Israelis currently in the country who are unable to return home.**

Abu Dhabi assists stranded tourists, orders hotels to keep the bill

Against that backdrop, Abu Dhabi’s Department of Culture and Tourism issued an official directive to hotel managers ordering them to extend the stays of guests who have reached their checkout date but cannot fly out “for reasons beyond their control.” According to the document, the cost of the extended stays will be funded by the Abu Dhabi authority, and hotels have been asked to submit invoices to the relevant bodies. The move applies only to the emirate of Abu Dhabi and is not a federal decision covering the entire UAE.

The measure follows an expansion of the war between Israel and the United States and Iran into the Gulf. Tehran has attacked targets in the UAE, prompting the closure of airspace and the suspension of civilian air traffic.

Earlier Sunday, an Israeli woman and her son were lightly injured by a blast after a drone struck a building in Abu Dhabi housing Israeli envoys. Authorities said fragments from an intercepted drone hit a tower complex that includes the Israeli Embassy and other foreign missions, damaging the facade of the Etihad Towers complex.



**Smoke rises from Zayed Port in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (Photo: REUTERS/Abdelhadi Ramahi)**

In Israel, meanwhile, the Tourism Ministry has shifted to emergency operations under the direction of Tourism Minister Haim Katz, following the launch of [Operation Roaring Lion](#). The ministry is providing accommodations for residents evacuated from their homes because of missile strikes and assisting tourists currently in Israel who wish to leave the country.

As of Sunday morning, about 37,400 tourists were in Israel. Since the start of the operation, roughly 700 have departed. The ministry said it is prepared to help tourists seeking to leave by arranging transportation to land border crossings and is maintaining continuous contact with the Israel Incoming Tour Operators Association, which is coordinating tour groups remaining in the country.

At the same time, the ministry is responsible for housing residents evacuated due to missile attacks nationwide. So far, more than 280 people have been placed in hotels under a framework prepared in advance with a broad inventory of rooms for emergencies, in cooperation with the Israel Hotel Association.

Director General Michael Izhakov has also ordered reinforcement of the ministry's 24/7 virtual information office. Since the start of the operation, about 500 inquiries have been handled, many requiring direct responses from ministry staff.

The ministry said it remains in ongoing contact with hoteliers, travel agents, tour guides and other tourism operators and is receiving updated assessments of needs on the ground.

Israel's land border crossings are currently operating on the following schedules: the Menachem Begin Crossing at Taba is open around the clock; the Yitzhak Rabin Crossing in the Arava is open from 6:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.; the Allenby Bridge terminal is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., with tourist processing available until 2:30 p.m.; and the Jordan River Crossing near Beit She'an is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., with arrivals permitted until 3:30 p.m.

Authorities advised travelers to [pay border fees in advance](#) to reduce waiting times and to arrive at crossings at least two hours before closing. Information is subject to last-minute changes, and travelers are urged to check for updates before departing for border terminals. Emergency information for tourists, including access to the virtual office, is available at: <https://www.gov.il/he/pages/emergency-information-for-tourists> <https://www.ynetnews.com/travel/article/sjic00jfk11x>

## US using cyber warfare to fracture Islamic regime from within its ranks

*A former top commander of US Cyber Command said that the US was reaching out*

*By DANIELLE GREYMAN-KENNARD MARCH 1, 2026 22:26 Updated: MARCH 1, 2026 22:34*

*t to senior officials within the regime, the IRGC, and the security forces, while also gathering intelligence.*



**US Navy sailors observe as an E-2D Hawkeye aircraft approaches an aircraft catapult to launch on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford, while operating in support of the Operation Epic Fury attack on Iran from an undisclosed location March 1, 2026. (photo credit: U.S. Navy/Handout via REUTERS)**

The United States is using [cyber operations](#) not only to disrupt Iran's military capabilities but to pressure senior regime officials to defect, a former top commander of US Cyber Command told *The Jerusalem Post* on Sunday, describing an information warfare campaign aimed at accelerating regime change from within.

Using information warfare, Lt. Gen. Charles L. Moore Jr. explained that the US was reaching out to senior officials within the regime, the IRGC, and the security forces to create the understanding that their lives now depend on backing the desires of the Iranian people for [regime change](#). Part of making this strategy effective, he explained, was using the kinetic actions on the ground to make the consequences of not complying clear.

"We're going to message directly to the types of individuals [in the IRGC, regime and security forces]: 'Listen, if you want to have a life and for you and your family, tell us what's going on here, here are the things that

you need to do,... Likewise, if you don't take those actions, your life is probably on a shot clock,' and that's being backed up by what they're seeing all around them," he explained.



*Remains of a car in the aftermath of an Israel and the US strike on a building in Tehran, Iran, February 28, 2026 (credit: Amir Kholousi/ISNA/WANA (West Asia News Agency) via REUTERS)*

"We need people at those senior levels that have influence and have sway, that are in charge, to hopefully come out and say 'we support the people, we're no longer supporting the regime.' And if we can get to that state, I think you could see a change happen pretty rapidly," he predicted, adding that the US military was also gathering intelligence using the cyber domain.

"When you set aside the kinetic actions we're taking against the nuclear capabilities, the missile development and launch capabilities, and their navy, as was laid out by the President (Donald Trump) and the Prime Minister (Benjamin Netanyahu), the other actions that we're taking are primarily about trying to set the table for regime change and to support the people," he said, asserting that 80% of Iran wanted to see a new government installed.

### **A widening alliance against Iran**

Continuing to speak on the more physical military actions being taken, the career Air Force command pilot said that the US and Israel could potentially soon expect more [regional partners](#) to join the attacks on Iran, noting how Tehran's recent missile-firing spree had left neighboring countries "fed up."

Asked about the recent analysis by the Institute for the Study of War, which suggested fractures within the regime were being evidenced by an increasing number of leaks to Western media, Moore said that the US would understand how deep the tears are once officials finally make public statements of dissent.

"We may see it via TV, news, or radio, or maybe more than anything, most likely, via some type of video. Is posted on the web, and that could be a very powerful point in this whole operation," he added.

Referencing General Dan Caine, the 22nd Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Moore noted that "the United States' ability to truly synchronize, integrate and layer effects from the air, from cyberspace and from space to achieve our military objectives" set it apart. Exemplifying the rapidly improving cooperation in these fields, Moore pointed to the recent operations in Venezuela, where US forces detained [Nicolás Maduro](#) in January.

"Let me tell you, from firsthand experience, there's nobody on the planet that knows how to do it with the degree of professionalism and outcome that you see from the United States," Moore claimed. "There's nobody on the planet that has the capabilities and effects that can be achieved in that regard."

Turning from recent successes to failings, the *Post* questioned how capable the US is of monitoring Tehran's cryptocurrency fundraising activities, which reportedly included \$1.7 billion in transfers from two Iranian Binance accounts to Iran's terrorist proxies last year, in violation of US sanctions, according to The New York Times.

Experts from the blockchain intelligence platform NOMINIS.io told the *Post* last week that since October 7 alone, more than a \$100 million has entered the Gaza Strip through cryptofinance.

Moore responded that the realities of Crypto and Iranian funding networks were "not lost" on the US or cyber operators in Israel. "There are lots of things that we can do and that we do do in this space to try to minimize their (Iran's) ability to truly continue to fund things at a significant level through [crypto]," he assured.

"It's kind of a fact, if you will, an unfortunate fact or truism of the digital space, the cyber environment that malicious capabilities are developed a lot faster than our capabilities to deal with them," he admitted. "Malicious offensive capabilities always seem to preclude and outpace, at least initially, our defensive capabilities - but none of that's lost on the United States, and they're working very hard in all those areas."

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-888441>

## **Missiles, routine, silence: Israel adjusts as war reaches heartland - analysis**

*A country was brought silent by war with Iran as first responders and the IDF Home Front Command deal with the impacts from Iran's arsenal.*

*By* **SETH J. FRANTZMAN** **MARCH 1, 2026 20:46** *Updated: MARCH 1, 2026 22:02*



*Smoke in the sky over Jerusalem, after missiles were launched from Iran towards Israel, following Israel and US strikes on Iran, February 28, 2026(photo credit: REUTERS/AMMAR AWAD)*

**In Tel Aviv, a playground frames one of the missile impacts from the first day of Operation Roaring Lion. The Iranian ballistic missile slammed into a neighborhood in central Tel Aviv overnight between February 28 and March 1.**

**Around 40 buildings were damaged, and dozens of people were wounded. One person was killed.**

**By the afternoon of March 1, the various crews dispatched to respond to the disaster had cleared rubble and had the site under control. Metal barriers were installed on the streets to protect people from walking under buildings that might collapse.**

Hundreds of men and women from the [IDF's Home Front Command](#) and volunteer organizations were busy working amid the rubble and the damaged buildings.



*The site of the Iranian missile impact in Tel Aviv. March 1, 2026. (credit: SETH J. FRANTZMAN)*

**Israelis keep going as Iranian war spreads**

This is Israel on the first and second day of the war with Iran. Israelis have been through other attacks from Iran and its proxies since the [October 7, 2023](#), massacre. Therefore, there is a sense that much of this is normal. People stay home. Essential stores remain open. Some takeaway is available at restaurants. We wait to hear where missiles have impacted.

On March 1, the country's highways were mostly deserted. The large traffic jams that often form in areas of Route 1 from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem were nowhere to be seen. Route 6, which runs north to south, was basically a speedway, with little traffic. It was Sunday, the first day of the week, yet no one was in a hurry to get

to work. Most people had been woken up several times in the night by sirens that sounded across central Israel, waking up millions.

I drove down from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv on March 1. I went through Petah Tikvah on the way. The road to get here includes Route 1, which snakes down through the Jerusalem hills, passing Sha'ar HaGai, also known in Arabic as Bab al-Wad. It was here in 1948 that Jewish troops tried to break the siege of Jerusalem. After passing the old Ottoman checkpoint on Route 1 and the British fort near Latrun, the road joins Route 6, which runs north and south. Another 20 minutes of driving brings one to the headwaters of the Yarkon, the river that runs to Tel Aviv from the foothills that form the border with Judea and Samaria. Around 1:37 in the afternoon, I had to pause because sirens warned of an incoming attack.

The routine in Israel is that there is first a phone alert warning that missiles have been launched. Then, after several minutes, sirens usually sound as the missiles finally arrive and are intercepted. The entire experience can last 10 or 20 minutes.

The salvo that Iran fired this afternoon, between around 1:30 p.m. and 1:40 p.m., appeared quite large. Numerous interceptions, with loud percussions and explosions, could be heard and felt. When it seemed to be over, I ducked out of a shelter and saw the puffs of smoke from the interceptions. Then I made my way to Tel Aviv to view the impact of an overnight Iranian missile.

The site of the impact had churned up a street and destroyed buildings; their concrete slabs hanging and excoriated.

The explosion also damaged buildings within a radius of several hundred meters. The damage usually consisted of broken windows and, sometimes, the metal blinds that cover them. The protocol in this instance is that damage reports are taken, and first responders check up on the wounded. Later, these areas are cordoned off and boarded up.

At one bar, which seemed to attract a lot of attention, the windows and doors had been blown off by the impact, but all the wine bottles above the bar were intact in a poignant tableau. As I looked at the bar, several volunteers

scurried along a balcony on the floor above, throwing down damaged parts of a window and the metal awning that had crowned it.

From Tel Aviv, I drove south, toward Tayo beach. This pretty section of sea and sand, between Bat Yam and Rishon LeTzion, still has the hallmarks of a beach that has not been completely overtaken by commercialism. There is a restaurant, a place to work out, and a boardwalk to run on.

A few people were doing their daily exercises. One person was out at sea kiteboarding. Usually, a windy day like this would bring out hordes of kiteboarders. Today, only one was braving the missiles. Another handful of people, who appeared to have been dancing all night, were also enjoying the afternoon breeze. On the boardwalk, dozens of pigeons gathered, hoping for food.

But there was no food today because there were no people. This sense that the coast was deserted, similar to the streets, evinced the quiet that has gathered over Israel since the war began on Saturday morning.

From Tayo Beach, the highways branch off, some heading south to Ashdod, others back toward Jerusalem. On the road to Jerusalem, near the Ottoman era checkpoint, the road to Beit Shemesh branches off and heads south.

I followed the road until I got to a turnoff that snakes around Beit Shemesh.

The low-lying hills here once separated the land of the ancient Israelites from the Philistines. This is the area where Judge Samson was reputed to have lived, and there is a cave in a valley here named for him. Today, this land has been well developed with all the neighborhoods stretching out around Beit Shemesh.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, I drove through [Beit Shemesh](#). In some of the Orthodox neighborhoods, children were dressing up for Purim. An Osher Ad store was full of people buying goods. Nearby was the site of an Iranian missile impact that killed nine people on March 1. It had struck a group of homes in the afternoon. The roads and streets were cordoned off around the impact site, but hundreds of people and various responders had come.

Construction equipment had been brought in to move some of the rubble and burned cars. Those cars evoked the memories and feelings of October 7. They were crushed, torn, and bent. The buildings, destroyed, damaged, and burnt, also evoked October 7. Red writing, sprayed on them to indicate that responders had checked the buildings, was also a reminder of that dark time.

A reminder of how death and destruction have become too much of a norm. Minutes before sunset, religious men gathered to recite the evening prayers. The prayers brought together all types, from soldiers to first responders, volunteers, and local people.

The hundreds of first responders were now changing shifts; some would stay on while others were leaving. Their helmets and safety gear removed, they began making their way back to vehicles parked up to two kilometers from the impact site.

Everyone had gathered quickly, but now the slow process of leaving and saying goodbye began. The sun was down. The work would go on into the night to secure the area where nine had been killed and dozens wounded.

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-888427>

## **IDF hits dozens of Iran regime headquarters used to oppress protesters**

*Two major headquarters which were struck were the Interior Ministry headquarters and the Tharallah headquarters in Tehran*



**By**[YONAH JEREMY BOB](#)**MARCH 1, 2026 17:04**

*A view shows the aftermath of an Israel and the US strike on a building in Tehran, Iran, February 28, 2026(photo credit: Amir Kholousi/ISNA/WANA (West Asia News Agency) via REUTERS*

**The IDF on Sunday afternoon announced that it had hit dozens of Iran regime headquarters used to oppress protesters in a potentially game-changing move designed to try to help demonstrators overcome the regime.**

**Two major headquarters which were struck were the Interior Ministry headquarters, which coordinated Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Basij militia efforts against protesters all over the country and the**

**Tharallah headquarters in Tehran, which coordinated those efforts within the all-important capital district.**

Dozens of other headquarters were also struck to make it harder for the IRGC and the Basij to organize, to intimidate them from appearing in public against protesters, and to remove some of their heavier weaponry.

Having already [dropped 1,200 bombs](#) on Iran, the IDF, along with the US air force, was already close to achieving air supremacy in Iranian airspace on Sunday morning.



Smoke rises after an Israeli military strike on Iran's Basij forces headquarters in Tehran, Iran, in this screengrab taken from a handout video released on March 1, 2026 (credit: IDF SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT)

### **Israel and US increasingly able to aid anti-regime protesters**

This shift marked an increased capability for Israel and the US to help anti-regime [protesters](#) by targeting specific regime forces which have been used to oppress and mass murder them for the last two months and during prior rounds of protests in recent decades.

In June 2025, it took several days for the air force to achieve such [supremacy](#), which signifies that essentially Iran's anti aircraft defenses have been so battered that Israeli aircraft

and drones can hover over target areas for extended periods without worrying as much about whether air defenses might target them.

Once this was achieved, the ability of the air force to target a wider range of targets constantly exponentially increased <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-888401>

## **After Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's death, who is running Iran's regime at this moment? - analysis**

*One likely candidate to run the Islamic regime after the Ayatollah's death is Ahmad Vahidi, who was the IRGC deputy chief on the eve of the war.*

*By YONAH JEREMY BOB MARCH 1, 2026 08:03 Updated: MARCH 1, 2026 17:22*



*Ahmad Vahidi speaks at a candidates' registration office in Tehran on May 30, 2024, during the first day of registration ahead of the country's presidential election. (photo credit: AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES)*

**With US and Israeli strikes on Iran's top leadership, up to 40 top officials, including Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the leader of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the leader of the Iranian military and many others so far, who is running the regime at this moment?**

**One likely candidate is Ahmad Vahidi, who was the IRGC deputy chief on the eve of the war. Vahidi was announced overnight by the IRGC as its new leader.**

**Given the IRGC's centrality to running the regime's security forces, Vahidi being its new leader could position him as the current reigning authority for the regime.**

**This would be ironic because Vahidi was not a well-known name or in the Iranian security forces' top 10 until very recently. He only became the IRGC deputy chief in December 2025, around two months ago.**



*Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei waves during a meeting in Tehran, Iran, February 17, 2026. (credit: Office of the Iranian Supreme Leader/WANA (West Asia News Agency)/Handout via REUTERS)*

Most of Iran's top leadership was killed in June 2025, and most of its current top leaders were also in some sense newer to their posts.

Vahidi was even below them, having been the Interior Minister from 2021 to 2024.

However, he had also been the defense minister from 2009-2013, and served in other relatively high posts and has been an IRGC commander since the late 1980s.

### **Ali Larijani is also a possible candidate to run Iran**

Another candidate could be Ali Larijani. Larijani on Sunday announced that he would be heading an interim

committee for running the country, given Khamenei's death. However, just because Larijani issued such a statement does not mean that he will truly call the shots.

Larijani has had ups and downs with Khamenei, having served as an IRGC commander, speaker of parliament, and a national security council chief, but was then disqualified from running for Iranian president to pave the way for Ebrahim Raisi's election in 2021, and was out of favor for a time.

However, in recent months, Larijani made a comeback as one of the older and still living top advisers to Khamenei, following so many top officials being killed in June 2025, and became Khamenei's number two, running the country's day-to-day security affairs and nuclear negotiations with the US.

But if Vahidi has greater IRGC backing, he could ultimately rule in Khamenei's place.

Earlier in the current military campaign, some leaked that Larijani may have been killed, but late Saturday, he appeared to tweet responses to the current conflict, and he was not named by the IDF late Saturday night as having been killed on a list of top assassinated officials.

What both Vahidi and Larijani have in common is that in normal circumstances, they would not necessarily be in the running to replace Khamenei.

Rather, a group of ayatollahs and clerics would meet to appoint one of their own to replace Khamenei.

As of 2024, when Raisi died in a helicopter crash, the obvious successor to Ali Khamenei, one for years, but who had seemed to take a back seat to Raisi, would have been Khamenei's son, Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei, who is in his mid-50s.

Though Ali Khamenei's son-in-law, daughter, and grandson have been killed, no one has reported Mojtaba as having been killed.

The Ayatollah's son is highly ambitious, aggressive, close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and a force to be reckoned with.

But he would need to get over two huge obstacles: the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ruhollah Khomeini, rejected the idea of family dynasties as un-Islamic.

He hand-picked Ali Khamenei as his successor, despite having a son, Ahmad Khomeini, who had served as his right-hand man.

Khamenei himself had made public statements also against dynastic legacies.

Incidentally, rumours are circulating to this day that six years into his rule, Khamenei had Khomeini's son killed by poisoning.

So that raises the question as to whether Khamenei would have been loyal to his public statements against dynasties and to his predecessor and mentor's statements along those lines, or whether he would have worried more about his son's power, and even his safety should someone else take over.

But with Ali Khamenei dead, his son Mojtaba's status may be uncertain.

Iran expert at INSS and at the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Raz Zimmt, told the Jerusalem Post in 2024 that there were two other dark horse possibilities, who had more of a chance with Raisi dead.

He named Alireza Araf and Mohsen Qomi, who are not well-known globally, but within Iran, they serve on the country's top body for selecting the supreme leader, known as the Assembly of Experts.

Both have strong religious credentials and would continue the role of the clergy atop the country's pyramid of power.

Araf is also a member of the Guardian Council, which decides who can run for all other national offices, and was formerly in charge of the country's universities.

Qomi has been the number one or two official of multiple special offices close to Khamenei, and is also an expert in international relations.

Araf has been described by some as more interested in technology, modernity, and innovation than many other ayatollahs, but in other contexts has come off as having a very tribal, almost medieval antagonism to Christians, Sunnis, atheists, and anyone different than his version of Shiism.

In addition, Araf is said to have been pushed by Khamenei onto the Assembly of Experts despite potentially not having passed certain clerical tests that most members need to pass.

Clearly, both are quite close to Khamenei, and Zimmt thought in 2024 that it was unlikely that Khamenei would retract his opposition to dynasties.

It was announced that Araf will be on the new interim committee running the regime now that Khamenei is dead which could position him as the leading clerical candidate, if the religious class maintains control.

But the wild card possibility that a top member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, such as Vahidi, has or will take over, is much higher with the regime needing to replace Khamenei mid-conflict and possibly with no ability for the cleric's council to meet to carry out an "orderly" transition to another cleric.

However, this would be more than just a succession as it could signal the end of the Islamic Revolution and the country's transition to more of a standard dictatorship or authoritarian regime, with merely a religious flavor - and that is even if the current US-Israeli efforts to topple the wider regime fail.

If Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is still alive, with no reports that he is dead, he could also eventually take over, but he has little security background, making him less likely in the current security-infused context. There were even reports that his vice president might be in the running, but this would be surprising given that he is below Pezeshkian and not the leader of either the IRGC or the clerical class.

The situation may also be highly dynamic, as whoever takes control now may be assassinated shortly, re-scrambling any calculations, which is part of the US-Israeli plan to try to topple the entire Islamic regime in favor of the more Western-oriented protesters. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-888327>

## Drones define Israel's military edge during Operation Roaring Lion

*As Operation Roaring Lion unfolds, Israel Air Force's unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have emerged as the backbone of its air strategy far, from Israel's borders*

By [ANNA AHRONHEIM](#) MARCH 1, 2026 14:50 Updated: MARCH 1, 2026 15:52



*Elbit Systems' Hermes 900 over Iran(photo credit: ELBIT SYSTEMS)*

**Twenty-four hours after the initial wave of US-Israeli airstrikes against Iran in Operation Roaring Lion, the Israeli Air Force announced that it has established air superiority over Iran.**

**The operation, also known as Epic Fury, began on Saturday morning as stealth fighter jets launched long-range precision missiles to destroy critical targets and eliminate the Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.**

**Neither the IDF nor the Pentagon has disclosed much about the platforms being used in the operation, but similar to June's Operation Rising Lion, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) were likely critical in the opening salvos, alongside the Israeli missiles and American Tomahawks.**

UAVs are relied upon to act as a coordinated fleet able to maintain awareness across vast distances, verify information through multiple sensors, and adapt quickly as conditions change. By distributing roles across various aircraft, operators gain redundancy, flexibility, and the ability to sustain operations for long periods without exposing personnel to risk.

Unmanned systems are central components of how information is gathered, interpreted, and acted upon.



*Heron type UAV. Accumulated orders of more than 18 billion dollars (credit: IDF SPOKESMAN'S UNIT, ISRAEL AIR FORCE)*

Israel has several types of UAVs, from ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) to strike to loitering munitions (suicide drones).

During the 12 Day War between Iran and Israel in June, aka Operation Rising Lion, UAVs closed operational loops in an unprecedented fashion. Notably, 70 percent of all IAF flight hours were carried out by UAVs as opposed to piloted fighter aircraft, such as F-35s.

The UAVs struck critical targets, including ballistic missile launchers and air defense systems, neutralizing them before they could be fired against Israel.

### **UAVs likely used during Operation Roaring Lion**

A breakdown of Israel's fleet of UAVs likely used this time around during Operation Roaring Lion is as follows:

Israel Aerospace Industries Heron TP is a large, long-

endurance aircraft capable of monitoring wide regions from high altitude. It is IAI's most advanced UAV, with a 40-hour endurance capability, a maximum takeoff weight of 11,685 pounds (5,300 kilograms), and a payload of 2,204 pounds (1,000 kg.). It can be used for reconnaissance, as well as combat and support roles, and it can carry air-to-ground missiles to take out hostile targets.

The [Heron TP](#) can carry multiple advanced sensors at once, allowing it to map broad patterns, track developments over long distances, and maintain stable communications links.

In a coordinated mission, it could function as a strategic anchor, namely the aircraft that sees the farthest, stays aloft the longest, and provides the overarching picture that other systems rely on. Its satellite-based connectivity allows it to remain in contact even when operating far from its launch point, making it the natural platform for long-range situational awareness.

[Elbit Systems' Hermes 900](#) can assume the role of persistent observer. While smaller than the Heron TP, it is designed to remain airborne for extended periods and to focus on specific areas that require continuous attention. Its modular payload allows it to shift between maritime monitoring, border observation, and detailed electro-optical surveillance.

In an operation such as the currently underway Roaring Lion, Hermes 900 would be the aircraft that fills in the details by tracking movement, verifying information, and maintaining a steady watch over zones where commanders need uninterrupted visibility.

During Rising Lion in June, the IAF's fleet of Hermes 900 Kohav helped locate dozens of Iran's concealed ballistic-missile launchers and strike Iran's mobile air defense systems, radar installations, and ammunition facilities.

Closer to the ground, loitering systems such as the [SkyStriker](#) and Harop would add flexibility and responsiveness. Although these platforms are often associated with strike roles, they also have the ability to remain airborne for extended periods, position themselves near areas of interest, and act as forward sensors. Their small size and quiet propulsion make them well-suited for monitoring narrow corridors, observing specific sites, and confirming information gathered by larger aircraft.

The [Harop](#), with its longer endurance and autonomous search capabilities, can cover areas that are difficult for other systems to reach, while the SkyStriker can be deployed quickly to provide additional eyes in the air where rapid presence is needed.

#### **A layered ecosystem of complementary roles**

Israel's fleet of unmanned aircraft has evolved from a supporting asset into the backbone of its long-range operational doctrine.

The events of last year's Operation Rising Lion and now Roaring Lion underscore how deeply this has taken hold.

Air superiority may still be declared by fighter jets, but the situational dominance that makes such declarations possible is increasingly built by platforms whose operators never leave the ground.

By weaving together high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft, persistent mid-altitude observers, and agile loitering systems, Israel has created an aerial architecture that can sense, interpret, and respond faster than any single platform could on its own.

As regional threats grow more dispersed, mobile, and concealed, this layered network of UAVs is no longer a technological advantage - it is the operating system of modern warfare.

When all these systems operate together, they create a multi-tiered architecture in which each platform reinforces the others. Information flows upward from the smallest systems to the largest, while tasking flows downward, creating a resilient network capable of maintaining awareness across large regions without relying solely on manned aircraft. <https://www.jpost.com/defense-and-tech/article-888382>



BS"D

#### **STEP BY STEP**

**STEP BY STEP:** Good news is that many friends and supporters of Lev U'Neshama (Heart and Soul) donated towards the Education Fund project to provide basic school supplies for actually 350 children within our Lev U'Neshama families.

We are grateful that the school supply part of our effort has been successful.

According to the Israel Population and Statistics office, Tzfat's population is about 40,000, and one third live at the poverty level. We do what we can so at least the children within our struggling LUN families can get the things they need.

Every week we are providing new sport shoes and eye exams/eyeglasses to the children on our request list. However, previous donations are rapidly dwindling. I am reaching out now before the fund has been emptied and we will have to say "no" to additional requests.

We work with two local shoe merchants who give Lev U'Neshama a discount but they advised us the cost of the shoes has increased. Also, we work with an accredited optician in town who also gives us a discount but his cost is stable.

Lev U'Neshama is an Israeli registered non-profit charity organization, volunteer run, no business expenses whatsoever and every \$ goes into our programs.

Shoes: \$45 per pair regular and \$60 for First Steps, baby shoes.

Eye Exam/Eyeglasses: \$60 per child.

Your support is urgently requested.

Or use the Zelle US to US bank transfer system (contact me at [mortsmo@aol.com](mailto:mortsmo@aol.com) for bank information).

US Donors may also send checks made payable to

Simcha Smolensky, my son, who is also a volunteer. Send to:

Rabbi Simcha Smolensky, 6739 N Mozart St Chicago IL 60645

**Your support will be appreciated.**

Yaffa Smolensky