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Trump says he may have 'forced' Israel's hand into war with Iranian 'lunatics'

Trump says Iran was 'going to attack first,' most people he'd considered as potential future leaders of Iran 'are dead'; said to have spoken with Netanyahu 15 times in run-up to war

By [Jacob Magid](#)

Today, 10:39 pm



US President Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in the Oval Office at the White House, March 3, 2026, in Washington. (AP/Mark Schiefelbein)

WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump on Tuesday denied that Israel dragged the US into war with Iran, insisting that if anything, the opposite could be true and that he felt Iran was going to attack first.

Speaking at a press conference in the Oval Office alongside visiting German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Trump also asserted that Iran's military capabilities have been "knocked

out" and speculated on who could lead the country following the death of supreme leader Ali Khamenei in an Israeli strike.

Asked by a reporter whether Israel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu forced the US into joining a war against Iran, Trump offered a denial that seemed to counter [comments made by](#) US Secretary of State Marco Rubio a day earlier.

"No, I might have forced their hands. You see, we were having negotiations with these lunatics, and it was my opinion that they [the Iranians] were going to attack first," Trump claimed.

Pentagon briefers on Sunday reportedly told Congress that the US did not have intelligence that Iran was planning a preemptive strike against the US. On Monday, Rubio suggested that Washington attacked only after learning that ally Israel was going to strike.

"They were going to attack. If we didn't do it, they were going to attack first. I felt strongly about that," Trump said of Iran on Tuesday. "So if anything, I might have forced Israel's hand," he added. "But Israel was ready, and we were ready."

A Channel 12 news report on Tuesday said that Trump and Netanyahu spoke some 15 times in the two months before the attacks were launched, and that the US president gave a green light to the operation after waiting to see if the last-ditch nuclear negotiations with Iran would remain deadlocked.



US President Donald Trump (right) meets with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in the Oval Office at the White House, March 3, 2026, in Washington. (AP/Mark Schiefelbein)

Speaking on day four of the US-Israeli campaign against Iran, Trump asserted that the Islamic Republic's navy, air force and air defenses have been "knocked out."

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"They have no navy. It's been knocked out. They have no air force. It's been knocked out. They have no air detection. That's been knocked out. Their radar's been knocked out. Just about everything's

been knocked out. So we'll see how we do," Trump said.

He said that the US would continue its campaign in Iran: "The big scale hitting goes now," he said. "They're going to be in for a lot of hurt. First we have to finish off the military."

He added that the US had an "unlimited" supply of "middle and upper ammunition, which is really what we're using in this war."



A plume of smoke rises after a strike on the Iranian capital Tehran, on March 3, 2026. (ATTA KENARE / AFP)

Turning to the discussion of the “day after” in Iran, Trump said the worst-case scenario would be someone taking over the country who is just as bad as the current regime.

“I guess the worst case would be — we do this, and then somebody takes over who’s as bad as the previous person... That could happen,” Trump said in response to a question from a reporter. “We’d like to see somebody in there that’s going to bring it back for the people.”

“Most of the people we had in mind are dead,” he said. “Now we have another group. They may be dead also, based on reports.”

Asked about Reza Pahlavi, the son of the late exiled former Iranian shah, Trump said that he seems like a nice guy but that someone currently living in Iran would probably be a more suitable candidate to take over the country.



A woman holds pictures of exiled Iranian crown prince Reza Pahlavi, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and US President Donald Trump as members of the Iranian community and supporters celebrate on February 28, 2026 in Los Angeles, California. (MARIO TAMA /Getty Images via AFP)

In a post on his Truth Social account earlier Tuesday, Trump said that it was “too late” to hold diplomatic talks with Iran.

“They want to talk. I said ‘Too Late!’” he wrote in response to a Washington Post op-ed hailing his decision to attack Iran.

Iran’s ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva on Tuesday cast doubt on the prospect of negotiations with the US: “For the time being, we are very doubtful about the usefulness of negotiation,” Ali Bahreini told reporters.

Speaking in the Oval Office, Trump also warned Iranian dissidents against taking to the streets while the bombing is ongoing.

“If you’re going to go out and protest, don’t do it yet,” he said.

Trump claimed the death toll in Iran’s crackdown on protesters in December and January is “much more” than 35,000, after putting the number at 32,000 last week. He said those imposing the crackdown used machine guns to mow down protesters.

The US president was also asked by a reporter why plans weren’t in place to evacuate Americans from the Middle East.

“Well, because it happened all very quickly,” he said.



Illustrative: Travelers are seen at the Ben Gurion International airport near Tel Aviv, February 26, 2026. (Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90)

In an unprecedented measure, the US State Department called on all Americans to leave over a dozen countries in the Middle East on Monday, even though no evacuation flights have been offered by the US government. The State Department is urging Americans to take commercial flights out of the region, even though much of its airspace is closed.

Trump also said Tuesday that it’s possible that oil prices will climb for a “little while” but that they’ll go back down, “lower than even before” after the war ends.

While praising Merz during their meeting, Trump had harsh words on Tuesday for European allies Britain and Spain.

“This is not Winston Churchill that we’re dealing with,” Trump said of British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who initially refused to let US forces use UK bases, before relenting.

The US president also revived his complaints about the UK’s deal to hand sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, despite his administration previously supporting the move. The remote Indian Ocean archipelago is home to a strategically important American naval and bomber base.

“The UK has been very, very uncooperative with that stupid island that they have,” Trump said.



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer speaks from Downing Street in central London on February 28, 2026, following the US and Israel's strikes on Iran. (Jonathan Brady / POOL / AFP)

He also criticized the British for their windmills and immigration policies and said they need to open up drilling in the North Sea. Trump also threatened to cut off trade with Spain, whose left-wing government refused to let US planes use its bases to attack Iran and objected to raising defense funding as part of NATO.

“Spain has been terrible,” Trump said, adding: “We could use their base if we want. We could just fly in and use it.”

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-says-he-may-have-forced-israels-hand-into-war-with-iranian-lunatics/>

IDF hits Iran's 'leadership complex' in Tehran; 12 Israelis hurt in Iran missile strikes *Iranian retaliatory strikes damage US embassy in Riyadh and other sites in Gulf; satellite images show Natanz nuclear site hit by recent strikes, IAEA confirms*

By [Emanuel Fabian](#), [Nava Freiberg](#),

[Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 4:43 pm

Emergency teams operate in multiple locations across central Israel after an Iranian missile barrage on March 3, 2026. (Fire and Rescue Service/Magen David Adom) [Go to website for video rdb](#)

Tuesday, saying that around 100 fighter jets dropped over 250 bombs on the complex as the joint US-Israeli bombing campaign and Iran's retaliatory missile and drone launches continued into their fourth day, wounding 12 people in Israel.

The buildings targeted in the complex included Iran's presidential bureau, the headquarters of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, a compound used by Iran's "most senior forum" for meetings, and an "institution for training Iranian army officers," according to the IDF.

"The leadership complex of the terror regime is one of the most secured assets in Iran and spans many streets in the heart of Tehran," the military said, describing it as the "most important and central headquarters for the Iranian terror regime."

"The leadership and security officials of the terror regime convened in the compound frequently, and from there conducted, among other things, situation assessments regarding the Iranian nuclear program and the advancement of the plan to destroy the State of Israel," the IDF added.

Later Tuesday, the IDF said the air force completed another wave of airstrikes in western Iran, targeting Iranian military assets. According to the military, the strikes hit dozens of Iranian ballistic missile launchers, air defense systems, drones, and other targets.

The military said the strikes were aimed at reducing the fire from Iran on Israel, and published footage showing some of the strikes.

In addition to strikes, an unsourced report from the Saudi al-Arabiya news outlet claimed Tuesday that Israeli special forces, including Mossad operatives, were active on the ground in Iran overnight.

The report did not provide any details about the purported operation, and Israel did not issue an immediate comment on the report.



A group of men inspects the ruins of a police station struck Monday amid the US-Israeli military campaign in Tehran, Iran, March 3, 2026. (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

Dozen wounded in Israel as Iran strikes back, hits US embassy in Riyadh

As the IDF kept pounding Tehran and cities across the country with strikes, Iran launched dozens more ballistic missiles and drones at Israel and Arab countries across the Gulf.

After a 10-hour lull, sirens again sounded across Israel Tuesday morning and into the afternoon, including in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Submunitions from a cluster bomb

warhead hit several locations in central Israel, wounding 12 people, medics said Tuesday afternoon.



Medics and security forces are seen next to damage caused by an Iranian missile strike in central Israel, on March 3, 2026. (Magen David Adom)

Magen David Adom said it treated a woman in her 40s in moderate condition who was injured by a blast, and four others in good condition after they were hit by glass shards and blasts.

The IDF has [confirmed](#) that [Iran launched ballistic missiles carrying cluster bomb warheads](#) at Israel, both in the [current conflict](#) and in June 2025's war.

The warhead of such missiles opens up while descending and spreads around 20 smaller munitions with around 2.5 kilograms (5.5 pounds) of explosives, in a radius

of around 8 kilometers (5 miles).

The IDF has reiterated that there is no change to the Home Front Command's guidelines for civilians when it comes to cluster bomb attacks.



A Magen David Adom vehicle is seen next to damage caused by an Iranian missile strike in central Israel, on March 3, 2026. (Magen David Adom)

While no major damage was reported in Israel, Iranian drones hit the US embassy in the Saudi Arabian capital Riyadh overnight, causing a "limited" fire on the premises, according to Saudi authorities, though videos appeared to show a large fire engulfing the compound.

The Saudi foreign ministry described the attack as "heinous and unjustified," and said it intercepted eight more drones in two cities, including the capital.

In the United Arab Emirates, debris from downed drones caused a fire at an oil facility in Fujairah, the state's media office said. The blaze was brought under control and operations resumed, it added.

According to a statement released by the Emirati defense ministry Tuesday, the UAE's air defenses have intercepted 172 of 186 ballistic missiles launched toward the country from Iran since Saturday, while 13 of them fell into the sea, and one landed on UAE territory. The UAE also said it has been targeted by hundreds of drones.

Emirati authorities have said that three people, all foreigners, were killed and 58 were injured in the UAE since Iran began its retaliatory campaign in the Gulf. Some buildings have sustained damage, including Dubai International Airport and Abu Dhabi's Zayed International Airport.



Iranian missiles are seen in the skies over Doha on March 3, 2026. (MAHMUD HAMS / AFP)

Explosions and sirens were also heard overnight in the Bahraini and Qatari capitals, as the Iranian armed forces announced they had launched strikes on the major US air base in Al-Udeid, Qatar.

Amid the strikes, Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari said Tuesday that Doha currently has no communication with Iran, adding that the Islamic Republic did not notify Qatar ahead of missile and drone strikes.

Ansari said that attempts to force a return to negotiations by pressuring Gulf countries will fail. Experts

believe that Iran's strategy is to hammer US allies in the region so that they push US President Donald Trump to return to talks with Iran.

Iran has tried but failed to target Hamad International Airport in Doha, the Qatari spokesman said, adding that all attempts were intercepted.

He also said that the two Iranian SU-24 bombers that were shot down by Qatar Monday were flying toward Doha and were warned before being shot down. Qatar is searching for the pilots, he said.

In Oman, several drones targeted the port of Duqm on its eastern coast on Tuesday, according to a security source quoted by the official Oman News Agency.

“The resulting damage was contained without any human casualties,” the report said. The attack was the second on the port in three days, with the sultanate hit despite acting as a mediator between Iran and the United States just days prior to the war.

Oman also shot down two further drones on Tuesday, while another crashed near its Salalah port, state media said.

Amid the strikes, the US Embassy in Oman instructed staff to shelter in place, and recommended that US citizens do the same. The shelter-in-place order will remain “until further notice,” the embassy said.

Images show Natanz nuclear site hit by recent strikes, IAEA confirms

Meanwhile, in Iran, satellite images taken by the Vantor geospatial intelligence firm Sunday and Monday showed that several buildings within the Natanz nuclear facility complex in Isfahan, Iran, appear to have sustained fresh damage in the US-Israeli bombing campaign.

In the bottom photo, taken on Monday, at least two small buildings inside the facility appear to have



sustained significant damage, after appearing unharmed in images captured the day before.

(COMBO) This combination of pictures created on March 2, 2026 using handout satellite images courtesy of Vantor shows a view of the Natanz nuclear complex facility near Natanz, Isfahan province, Iran, on March 1, 2026 (top) and on March 2, 2026, with damage observed on several buildings. (Satellite image ©2026 Vantor/AFP)

The Natanz facility was one of the main targets in the previous 12-day war between Israel and Iran in June, which the US briefly joined.

Iran accused Israel and the US on Monday of having again attacked the facility, though neither the IDF or the Pentagon announced any strikes on the site.

“The criminal regimes of the United States and Israel, pursuing their aggression, again targeted the Natanz nuclear site on Sunday afternoon in two brutal attacks,” Iran’s atomic energy chief Mohammad Eslami said in a letter to the UN’s nuclear watchdog, quoted by the IRNA news agency.

The International Atomic Energy Agency later confirmed that buildings at the Natanz nuclear facility sustained partial damage.

“Based on the latest available satellite imagery, IAEA can now confirm some recent damage to entrance buildings

of Iran’s underground Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant (FEP),” the agency wrote on X, adding, “No radiological consequence expected and no additional impact detected at FEP itself, which was severely damaged in the June conflict.”

Iran warns Europe not to get involved; UK to send warship to protect Cyprus base

Iran’s foreign ministry on Tuesday warned European countries not to take any part in the US-Israeli campaign against the Islamic Republic, saying it “would be an act of war” that would be “regarded as complicity with the aggressors.”



Germany, France, and the UK said on Sunday that they could take “proportionate defensive action to destroy Iran’s capability to fire missiles and drones at their source.”

According to a Tuesday [report](#) in the British daily The Times, the UK will send a warship to defend the RAF Akrotiri British sovereign base in Cyprus, after it was targeted by Iranian drones Monday.



A fighter jet takes off from RAF Akrotiri base following two reported drone attacks near Limassol on March 2, 2026. (AFP)

“HMS Duncan is ‘likely’ to be deployed to defend RAF Akrotiri as Middle East conflict escalates,” the report read. The Times report, citing three sources, said British defense minister John Healey had a meeting yesterday with senior military figures in which they discussed sending HMS Duncan to the region.

France is also planning to bolster the island’s defenses, moving to send anti-missile and anti-drone systems to Cyprus following the Iranian attacks, according to an earlier Cypriot media report.

Iran raises death toll past 780

The Iranian Red Crescent said Tuesday that more than 780 people have been killed nationwide in US and Israel strikes since Saturday. The tolls could not be verified by AFP.

“According to field reports from operational teams, unfortunately, 787 compatriots have been martyred in these attacks,” the Red Crescent said on its website.

It said strikes since Saturday have hit 153 cities and more than 500 locations across Iran in more than 1,000 attacks.

An Iranian flag is placed amidst rubble and debris next to a destroyed residential building near Ferdowsi Square in Tehran on March 3, 2026. (Atta Kenare/AFP)

Iran’s supreme leader Ali Khamenei was [killed](#) Saturday in Israel’s opening strike on his compound in Tehran.

In response, Iran escalated its attacks on the region, continuing to target Israel with barrages of missiles. As of Tuesday, 11 people had been killed in Israel as a result of Iranian ballistic missile attacks since the full-scale conflict began.

[https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-says-it-hit-irans-leadership-](https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-says-it-hit-irans-leadership-complex-in-tehran-overnight/)

[complex-in-tehran-overnight/](#)

Air Force crews say intense Iran campaign driving nonstop flights and record pace

Dozens and at times hundreds of aircraft have taken part in individual strike waves, with commanders placing top priority on maintaining continuity of operations and meeting mission objectives

[Elisha Ben Kimon](#)|12:41

The Air Force is operating at full capacity in the opening days of Operation Roaring Lion, carrying out repeated waves of strikes deep inside Iran every few hours, as flight crews describe an unprecedented operational tempo.

Dozens and at times hundreds of aircraft have taken part in individual strike waves, with commanders placing top priority on maintaining continuity of operations and meeting mission objectives.

IAF strikes in Iran (Video: IDF) [Go to website for video rdb](#)

Maj. B., an F-16 combat navigator, said the scale and intensity of the campaign have pushed squadrons to their limits.

“This war is unique. It is pushing the Air Force to the edge,” he said. “Every crew member who comes in has to fill a role because everyone is flying at a high tempo and receiving many missions.”

[US officials fear missile interceptor shortage could force premature end to war with Irannews](#)

He said he has taken part in several long-range sorties over Iran, in addition to interdiction missions along closer fronts. His squadron participated in the first wave of strikes at the outset of the war.

“In terms of the number of sorties and aircraft, we are at much higher levels than in the previous round of

fighting in June,” he said. “We haven’t completed four days and we’ve already surpassed the number of flights we had then.”

According to him, aircrews are working extended hours with limited sleep to sustain the pace of operations.

“Each crew member is working long hours throughout the day. We count sleep hours for everyone, and it’s not what we were used to. Everything is to deliver the most aggressive campaign possible. We are fighting a state, not a terror organization.”

The missions involve lengthy flights requiring sustained concentration. The outbound leg, he said, is especially complex, with multiple procedures and target confirmations before weapons release.

“There aren’t many points where you can reduce the workload and relax,” he said. “Maybe a little once you cross into relatively safer areas on the way back.”

To manage the long hours in the cockpit, crews bring small supplies — energy bars, dried fruit and water — to maintain focus.

Strikes in Tehran

Maintaining operational secrecy, particularly regarding timing, adds another layer of strain.

“If the timing becomes known, the risk to us increases and the ability to harm the country grows,” he said. “There are difficult feelings too — whether someone close to you will be in a protected area and have time to prepare. But we’re Israelis, and everyone knew this was coming.”

While much of the public discussion has focused on strikes against Iranian missile capabilities and senior figures, he said the Iranian Air Force has posed limited challenges so far.

“It doesn’t feel like Gaza,” he said. “Each mission has its own emphasis. Every crew member going to Iran doesn’t want to be the one who is surprised. In most sorties there have been no unusual incidents. There are no dogfights. They try to be active, but so far we haven’t encountered significant aerial threats.”

For Maj. B., the campaign is also shaped by the memory of Oct. 7.

“As someone who served for many years in the standing army and was on duty on Oct. 7, I am part of the military — the same military that failed in its mission,” he said. “That is burned into my mind. There isn’t a flight I take where I don’t think about Oct. 7. I do everything so that it won’t happen again.”

He described serving in the current campaign as both a heavy responsibility and a privilege.

“It’s a privilege to be in a place that influences the security of Israel in such a way,” he said, concluding with wishes for a happy Purim and Ramadan Kareem to the public.

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/b13koo4twg#autoplay>

IDF strikes secret underground nuclear complex in Tehran

Fighter jets targeted the covert 'Minzadehei' compound, an underground facility where Iran's nuclear weapons group operated under the country's Defense Ministry

[Elisha Ben Kimon](#) | Updated: 14:10

The IDF said Tuesday it struck a secret underground nuclear complex in Tehran, describing it as a key site where Iran was developing components for a nuclear weapon, as the air campaign in Iran and Lebanon continued at a high tempo.



According to the IDF, fighter jets targeted the covert “Minzadehei” compound, an underground facility where Iran’s nuclear weapons group operated under the country’s Defense Ministry.

Illustration of the Iranian secret underground nuclear complex that was attacked (Photo: IDF)

IDF spokesperson Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said that during a previous operation in June, Israel dealt heavy blows to Iran’s nuclear

weapons group. He said the Iranian regime later transferred parts of its nuclear infrastructure to fortified underground bunkers in an effort to protect and conceal continued weapons development. “Despite the severe damage to the nuclear weapons group, the Iranian regime did not stop its military nuclear activity,” Defrin said. “It continued to develop the capabilities required for a nuclear weapon while relocating infrastructure to an underground, airstrike-resistant site.”

Inside the compound, he said, a group of nuclear scientists was secretly working on developing a central component of a nuclear weapons system.



(Photo: IDF)

The IDF said Military Intelligence tracked the scientists’ movements and identified their new location, enabling what it described as a precise strike on the secret complex.

The strike “removes a core component of the Iranian capability to develop a nuclear weapon,” Defrin said, calling it part of a broader series of operations aimed at eliminating what Israel views as the Iranian nuclear threat.

The IDF said that since the start of the current operation, Air Force pilots have carried out about 1,600 strike sorties in Iran and dropped roughly 4,000 munitions — surpassing the total number of munitions used during the previous

round of fighting in June.

In the past 24 hours alone, Air Force pilots launched more than 300 consecutive waves of strikes in Iran and Lebanon, targeting hundreds of sites and what the IDF described as strategic Iranian assets.

The IDF also said it has destroyed dozens of missile launchers that were prepared for attacks against Israel.

In Lebanon, operations are continuing from the air and on the ground. The IDF said it has struck operatives from Hezbollah’s Radwan force, the group’s elite unit.

The latest strikes come as Israel continues to operate deep inside Iran while maintaining pressure on Hezbollah in Lebanon in what officials describe as a multi-front campaign.

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/b1qy13nybx>

IDF 'flattens' building where Iran's Assembly of Experts was picking Khamenei's successor

Iranian news agencies reported that the building was "flattened" during the Israeli strikes.

By **AMICHAJ STEIN**, **GOLDIE KATZ**, **REUTERS** MARCH 3, 2026 16:39 Updated: MARCH 3, 2026 17:45



Birds fly as smoke rises following an explosion, after Israel and the US launched strikes on Iran, amid the US-Israel conflict with Iran, in Tehran, Iran, March 2, 2026. (photo credit: MAJID ASGARIPOUR/WANA (WEST ASIA NEWS AGENCY) VIA REUTERS)

The IDF targeted a building in which Tehran's 88-member Assembly of Experts was meeting to choose Iran's next supreme leader, Israeli sources told The Jerusalem Post on Tuesday.

Iranian news agencies reported that the building was "flattened" during the Israeli strikes.

The aftermath of an Israeli strike on Qom, Iran, on

March 3, 2026. (CREDIT: SECTION 27A COPYRIGHT ACT) [Go to website for video rdb](#)

No injuries or deaths resulting from the strike have been reported as of early Tuesday evening.

Earlier on Tuesday, Iran's ISNA news agency cited a member of the Assembly of Experts as saying that choosing the successor to the previous [supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#), "won't take long."

Operation Roaring Lion

Khamenei and many top Iranian military and intelligence officials were killed early on Saturday after Israel began Operation Roaring Lion.

As of Monday night, the IDF has [dropped over 2,500 bombs](#) on the Islamic Republic and attacked over 600 targets.

The IAF struck a leadership complex in Tehran overnight, with approximately 100 [fighter jets](#) dropping over 250 bombs on the complex.

According to the IDF, the complex contained the President's headquarters, the headquarters of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, a meeting compound used by the Islamic Republic's senior forum, and a headquarters for training Iranian military officers.

Jerusalem Post Staff and Yonah Jeremy Bob contributed to this report.

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-888676>

Israeli strike on 'Assembly of Experts' hits at symbolic heart of Iran's Islamic regime - analysis

Targeting the Assembly is a strike that disrupts the succession process, and, more symbolically, it is a psychological strike at everything the Islamic Republic stands for.

By[ALEX WINSTON](#)*MARCH 3, 2026 18:02**Updated: MARCH 3, 2026 20:59*



Ruhollah Khomeini (L) the leader and founder of Islamic Republic of Iran, looking frail votes for parliament election, in his residence Jamaran, in north Tehran 8th April 1988. (photo credit: Kaveh Kazemi/Getty Images)

The IDF on Tuesday targeted a building in which the 88-member Iranian "Assembly of Experts" was reportedly meeting to choose the Islamic Republic's next supreme leader, Israeli sources have told The Jerusalem Post.

Iranian news agencies said the structure in Qom was "flattened."

Tasnim, affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), confirmed that the Assembly's compound in Qom had been struck and that its building in Tehran, located at the former parliament site, was also hit overnight.

A Telegram channel, Zed TV, claimed the strike targeted a formal session convened to select the Islamic Republic's next leader, alleging members were killed or wounded.

If accurate, the strikes were aimed at the most sensitive institutional body of the Islamic Republic.



1978: Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1900 - 1989), the Iranian religious and political leader. (credit: Keystone/Getty Images)

The Assembly of Experts (Majles-e Khobregan-e Rahbari) is the clerical body empowered under Iran's constitution to appoint, supervise, and, in theory, dismiss the Supreme Leader.

The second, and last, person to fill that role was [Ali Khamenei](#), who was killed in Israeli airstrikes on Saturday morning.

Assembly system keeps power with regime-approved clerics

The Assembly consists of 88 clerical jurists (mujtahids) elected to eight-year terms, though all candidates must first be vetted by the Guardian Council. That council is itself half appointed directly by the Supreme Leader and half indirectly under his influence.

The system ensures that only regime-approved clerics reach the ballot.

In 2016, 801 applied to run, and just 166 were approved. Reformists and independent figures are routinely excluded. While members are elected by public vote, the range of choice is tightly controlled.

Under Articles 107 and 111 of the Islamic Republic Constitution, the Assembly must appoint a new leader "within the shortest possible time" upon death, resignation, or dismissal.

It is also tasked with supervising the sitting leader and determining whether he still meets the required qualifications of Islamic scholarship, justice, prudence, and political capability.

In practice, that supervision has never materialized.

The Assembly has never dismissed, or even publicly questioned, a sitting Supreme Leader. Its meetings are confidential, and its reports are available only to the eyes of a select few.

Over the course of Khamenei's long, unchallenged reign, the body has evolved into what many inside and outside Iran describe as ceremonial, but Israel's strikes have struck at that ceremonial heart of the regime.

When [Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini](#) died in 1989, the Assembly elevated Khamenei despite his relatively modest religious credentials at the time.

A constitutional amendment later removed the requirement that the Supreme Leader be a 'marja,' a title given to the highest level of Twelver Shia religious cleric, smoothing his position retroactively. That episode remains the only true test of the Assembly's authority.

The balance of power within Iranian politics has shifted steadily since then toward the security establishment, particularly the [IRGC](#). While the constitution vests authority in clerical jurists, political reality in Tehran is shaped by military influence and, formerly, by Khamenei's longevity and patronage.

But the Assembly of Experts still carries important meaning within Iran's system, even symbolically. The council was meeting to appoint a successor to Khamenei just days after his death.

In Iran, religion is, in theory, the highest possible authority. The Islamic Republic was founded in 1979 on Khomeini's doctrine of velayat-e faqih, or "guardianship of the Islamic jurist," which combined Shi'ite clerical authority with the machinery of the state.

Under this principle, ultimate political legitimacy flows from God and is exercised through a senior Islamic jurist (the Supreme Leader) whose authority eclipses elected institutions and controls the armed forces and the judiciary.

Khomeini's base was the holy city of Qom, where the building was targeted, and one of Iran's holy cities. From there, he turned clerical networks into a governing elite that has ruled the Islamic Republic for almost five decades.

Targeting the Assembly may not quite be the same as direct hits against the IRGC or other military infrastructure in modern warfare. Nor will it lead to the dismantling of the Islamic Republic overnight.

But it is a strike that disrupts the succession process, and, more symbolically, it is a psychological strike at everything the Islamic Republic stands for. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/faq/article-888688>

Missile shrapnel falls in central Israel, 12 wounded as Iran continues barrage

Iranian missile strikes target central Israel, injuring 12. Authorities are on the scene, managing the situation.
By [JERUSALEM POST STAFF](#) MARCH 3, 2026 00:54 Updated: MARCH 3, 2026 16:23



Iranian missile debris falls within central Israel. (photo credit: COURTESY NATIONAL FIRE AND RESCUE)

Shrapnel from multiple Iranian missile strikes fell on at least three locations in central Israel, injuring 12 on Tuesday afternoon, according to reports from Israeli emergency response teams. Israel Police are currently on scene managing the affected areas.

Magen David Adom (MDA) paramedics are additionally on scene at the impact sites, providing medical treatment to approximately a total of 12 individuals, including a woman around 40 years old in

moderate condition with blast injuries, and the other 11 individuals in mild condition suffering from glass, shrapnel, and blast-related injuries.

MDA Paramedic Yehuda Edri released a statement regarding one of the impact sites, "When we arrived at the scene, we saw significant destruction in the building, windows were broken, pieces of concrete fell, and there was a lot of commotion at the scene. A woman in her 40s suffered from the impact and was moderately injured. We provided her with advanced medical treatment and evacuated her to the hospital in moderate condition."



Emergency services arrive at the missile shrapnel impact scene in central Israel. March 3, 2026. (credit: COURTESY MDA)

Hezbollah rocket impact

In a separate incident, a home in northern Israel was hit by a Hezbollah rocket on Tuesday morning, after the terrorist group fired several rockets into Israel from neighboring Lebanon.

No serious injuries were reported following the incident, and the four family members living in the home were treated by emergency responders for post-traumatic symptoms.

Two of the residents, a 64-year-old man with glass shrapnel injuries and a 24-year-old woman with anxiety symptoms, were evacuated to Ziv Medical Center in Tzfat.

The other two family members did not require further treatment.

Emergency services respond to the scene of a Hezbollah missile strike in the northern Israel area on Tuesday, March 3, 2026. (credit: ISRAEL FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY)

Immediately after the Hezbollah rocket volley, reports were received of a direct hit on a building in central Israel from an Iranian missile. No casualties were reported aside from two people who were treated for injuries that occurred en route to the protected area, according to MDA.

Just before 1 p.m., sirens sounded throughout Israel, and the media reported shrapnel falling in central Israel. No injuries were reported following the missile barrage, according to MDA, which added that first responders provided on-site medical care to individuals who were injured on their way to shelter.

Sirens over Jerusalem triggered by false alarm, IDF confirms after investigation

Sirens sounded over Jerusalem and the surrounding areas on Tuesday morning due to a suspected hostile aircraft infiltration.

The IDF, investigating the incident, confirmed that it was triggered by a false alarm.



Sirens sound across Israel Monday evening following barrage from Iran

[Rocket sirens](#) sounded across Israel after Iran fired a new barrage of missiles against the country late on Monday night.

Initial reports indicated [Hezbollah](#) fired rockets at northern Israel simultaneously with Iranian ballistic missile fire, but the reports were denied by the IDF Spokesperson's Unit.

The IDF said in a statement that, even if the event had ended, people were asked to remain close to a safe space and continue following the instructions from the Home Front Command.

No casualties or injuries resulting from the barrage were reported, according to Magen David Adom. The police said that it was responding to a missile impact in central Israel.

Later in the night, several alerts were deployed over an unmanned aircraft vehicle (UAV) intrusion in the northern confrontation line and the upper Galilee, with no official statement by the authorities about the situation. According to the IDF, two hostile UAVs crossed into Israel from Lebanon and were intercepted by the military.

Iran strikes Cyprus, several Middle East nations



According to reports by several media, the [Iranian attack against Israel](#) was done in coordination with attacks against several Middle East targets.

Reports in Israeli media said that explosions were heard in Cyprus after an Iranian missile targeted the Mediterranean island, while no injuries were reported.

The US Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, said in a statement that two drones hit its main building, causing a small fire, with no casualties registered.

Smoke rises from a burning building hit by an Iranian drone strike, after Israel and the US launched strikes on Iran, in Seef district, Manama, Bahrain, February 28, 2026 (credit: REUTERS/HAMAD I MOHAMMED)

Two military facilities were directly struck in the United Arab Emirates, while two drones hit the proximity of a base in Bahrain.

Given the situation, the [US issued an alert asking Americans to leave most countries in the Middle East](#), with the list including Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel (including the West Bank and Gaza), Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the UAE, and Yemen. <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/defense-news/article-888592>

Hezbollah fires on Tel Aviv as Israel threatens Iranian officers in Lebanon

Lebanese terror group carries out first long-range attack since start of Iran war; IDF says 'no safe place' for Iranian regime in Lebanon

By [Tol Staff](#) and [Agencies](#) Today, 3:37 am



Firefighters inspect rubble as smoke rises from a building hit by an Israeli airstrike in Dahiyeh, a southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, March 3, 2026. (AP Photo/Hassan Ammar)

Hezbollah fired on central Israel on Tuesday, the terrorist group's first long-range attack since the start of the Iran war, as IDF airstrikes hammered Hezbollah and Israel threatened Iranian officials in Lebanon.

Tehran-backed Hezbollah reprised its rocket and drone attacks on Israel on Monday, after a long hiatus, in retaliation for the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a wave of joint US-Israeli strikes.

Hezbollah fired three rockets toward Tel Aviv and the Haifa area, setting off sirens across central Israel and parts of the north.

Air defenses intercepted two of the rockets and one landed in an open area, causing no injuries, the IDF said.

Hezbollah overall fired dozens of rockets and several drones at northern Israel on Tuesday. One rocket hit a home in a border community, injuring one.

After firing on northern Israel, Hezbollah said it targeted an Israeli army base in response to the "criminal Israeli aggression that targeted dozens of Lebanese cities and towns, including the southern suburbs of Beirut."

Hezbollah also claimed to have downed an Israeli drone and fired at Israeli Merkava tanks near the Lebanese villages of Kfar Shouba and Kfarkela.

Troops of the 300th 'Baram' Regional Brigade operate in southern Lebanon, in a handout photo issued by the military on February 25, 2026. (Israel Defense Forces)



A senior Hezbollah official said that after more than a year of abiding by a ceasefire as Israel's strikes continued on Lebanon, the group's patience has ended, leaving it with no option but to fight Israel.

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"The Zionist enemy wanted an open war, which it has not stopped since the ceasefire agreement," Mohamoud Komati said. "So let it be an open war."

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun told the ambassadors of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United States, France and Egypt on Tuesday that Hezbollah has been firing rockets from areas north of the Litani River, outside an area south of the river and along the border with Israel, where Lebanese troops have earlier said they are in full control.

Israel says 'no safe place' for Iran in Lebanon

In response to the attacks, the Israeli military issued an unusual threat against Iranian regime officials in Lebanon, warning that they will be targeted if they do not leave the country within 24 hours.

"The IDF warns representatives of the Iranian terror regime who are still in Lebanon to leave immediately before being targeted," said army spokesman Col. Avichay Adraee.

"The IDF warns that it will not tolerate any presence of representatives of the Iranian terror regime in Lebanon and will grant regime representatives currently in Lebanon 24 hours to leave the country," Adraee said. "After that, there will be no safe place for representatives of the Iranian regime in Lebanon, and the IDF will target them wherever they are found."

The warning came as Israel carried out airstrikes around Lebanon. The IDF said the Israeli Air Force had carried out a wave of airstrikes against some 60 Hezbollah targets across southern Lebanon.



Smoke rises from Israeli airstrikes in Dahiyeh, a southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, March 3, 2026. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla)

According to the IDF, the strikes targeted weapon depots, missile launchers, command centers, and other infrastructure belonging to the Lebanese terror group.

The military said it struck several "central" sites belonging to Hezbollah and the Hamas terror group in Sidon and Tyre.

"The infrastructure sites were used by the terror organizations to advance and carry out various terror attacks against IDF troops and Israeli civilians," the IDF said.

Before carrying out the strikes, the IDF issued evacuation warnings for Lebanese civilians in the area.

Hezbollah ally Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya said its command center in Sidon was targeted by Israel, after the IDF told people to flee the area within 300 meters (328 yards) of a building in the coastal Lebanese city.

The IDF also issued an evacuation warning for buildings in the Lebanese coastal city of Tyre and three villages in southern Lebanon, ahead of airstrikes against Hezbollah infrastructure. The IDF has in total warned the residents of more than 80 villages in Lebanon to evacuate.

In other strikes, the IDF said it struck a Hezbollah rocket launcher in Lebanon used in a barrage on the

Golan Heights. According to the military, the launcher was hit in a drone strike within minutes of the barrage of some 15 rockets.

The IDF also said that a drone strike killed a Hezbollah operative, alongside several other members of the terror group, who fired an anti-tank missile at Israeli troops in southern Lebanon, near the village of Arnoun.

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"Hezbollah made a very big mistake when it attacked us," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said during a visit to the Palmachim Airbase with Defense Minister Israel Katz and IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at Palmachim Air Base on March 3, 2026. (Ma'ayan Toaf/GPO)



“We have already responded forcefully, and we will respond with even greater and additional force,” Netanyahu said.

Hezbollah is dragging Lebanon into a war “solely because of the death of that mass murderer with whom they have no connection,” Netanyahu said, referring to Iran’s slain Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

“They need to look out for themselves, and they would do well to do so quickly. We will continue to do what is necessary for our defense,” Netanyahu said.

Officials in Lebanon said at least 50 people had been killed in the airstrikes and 335 wounded, alongside tens of thousands who were displaced.

The IDF said it had [sent additional troops into southern Lebanon](#) and took new positions on several strategic points close to the border.

Lebanon’s state-run National News Agency said the Lebanese army was evacuating some of its border positions.

Also, in Tehran, an Israeli airstrike killed Daoud Alizadeh, the acting commander of the Lebanon Corps in Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ Quds Force, the IDF said.

Alizadeh had taken responsibility for the IRGC Quds Force’s Lebanon Corps from Mohammad Reza Zahedi, who was killed in an Israeli strike on Damascus in April 2024, making him “the highest-ranking Iranian commander responsible for Lebanon,” according to the military.

Syria bolsters border as thousands flee

Syria [reinforced its border](#) with Lebanon with rocket units and thousands of troops, eight Syrian and Lebanese sources told Reuters.

The Syrian officers said the Syrian reinforcement operation began in February but sped up in recent days. The Syrian and Lebanese armed forces do not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The Syrian officers, including a senior member of the military, said the move was aimed at preventing arms and drugs smuggling as well as blocking Hezbollah or other terrorists from infiltrating Syria.

A Syrian security official said Damascus had no plans for military action against any neighboring country, “But Syria is prepared to deal with any security threat to itself or its partners.”



Syrians and Lebanese line up at passport control as they cross the Syrian-Lebanese border into Syria, fleeing Lebanon due to Israeli airstrikes, in Jdeidet Yabous, Syria, March 3, 2026. (AP Photo/Ghaith Alsayed)

Thousands of Syrians living in Lebanon also crossed back into Syria, fleeing the Israeli strikes.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees said the number of people crossing from Lebanon into Syria jumped on Monday to 10,629 from typically between 3,900 and 4,400 a day since the holy Islamic month of Ramadan began in February. The vast majority were Syrian, but a small number of Lebanese citizens also crossed.

The Lebanese government also pushed back against Hezbollah on Tuesday. Lebanese broadcaster LBCI reported that the Lebanese army arrested 12 armed Hezbollah members at one of its checkpoints on Tuesday.

Their arrest came after Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam declared Hezbollah’s military operations “illegal acts.”

Republican US Senator Lindsey Graham called on the US to join the Lebanese theater, telling US President Donald Trump to join Israel in striking Hezbollah.

“Fly with Israel and go after Hezbollah, which has American blood on its hands. Not only take the mothership of Iran. Also take the proxy of Hezbollah,” Graham told reporters on Capitol Hill.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/hezbollah-fires-on-tel-aviv-as-israel-threatens-iranian-officers-in-lebanon/>

Unknown suspect fires gun at Toronto synagogue on first night of Purim, police investigate

Toronto police were called to Temple Emanu-El at around 10:49 p.m. following reports of gunfire. Officers found multiple bullet holes in the synagogue’s front windows and launched an investigation.

By MATHILDA HELLER MARCH 3, 2026 19:42 Updated: MARCH 3, 2026 21:14



A general view of the police station on January 29, 2014 in Toronto, Canada. (photo credit: Jag Gundu/Getty Images)

A Toronto synagogue was shot at on the first night of Purim on Monday evening, leaving the building damaged but causing no injuries.

Toronto police were called to Temple Emanu-El at around 10:49 p.m. following reports of gunfire. Officers found multiple bullet holes in the synagogue's front windows and launched an investigation.

The Toronto Police Service told The Jerusalem Post on Tuesday that “the investigation is being led

by members from our Integrated Gun & Gang Task Force, and that they are liaising with our Hate Crime Unit.”

The police have also increased patrols in the area.

Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow called it an “unacceptable act of [antisemitism and intimidation](#)” and said she will not tolerate antisemitic hate in the city.

“As we have seen repeatedly, incidents increase across our city as international events unfold. I want to be clear: it is never acceptable to target faith communities or cultural groups,” she added, alluding to the escalating conflict between Israel and Iran.



People gather in support of Palestinians as the Palestinian flag flies at Toronto's City Hall, after Canada officially recognised the Palestinian state in September, in Toronto, Ontario Canada, November 17, 2025. (credit: REUTERS/Wa Lone)

Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree said he was “deeply concerned” by the reports, adding that “violence has no place in our communities” and promising to stand against antisemitism and hate.

Premier of Ontario Doug Ford called it a “vile and targeted act of antisemitism” and “an attack not only on a place of worship, but on the safety and dignity of [Ontario's Jewish community](#).”

“Antisemitism has no place in our province,” he said. “We stand firmly with our Jewish neighbors and will always defend their right to gather, worship, and live openly and safely in Ontario.”

'Military-grade' weapons used in attack

Rabbi Elchanan Poupko claimed on X/Twitter that “military-grade weapons” were used against the place of worship and that he

had been told “with high confidence” that [IRGC operatives](#) were responsible.

He called on Canada to deploy military and federal resources to defend Canadian Jews.

Canada's opposition leader, Pierre Poilievre, said Jewish homes, schools, and places of worship are “under constant threat in Canada” and urged authorities to “root out this scourge of antisemitism.”

The incident occurred hours after Temple Emanu-El had hosted Purim celebrations.

Israel's Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism Minister Amichai Chikli posted images of the bullet-riddled windows on social media, noting that shots were fired at the synagogue and referencing a formal warning letter his office sent to Canada's public safety minister in January 2026 about the rising threat to Jewish institutions in Canada. <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-888706>

Iran and its proxies pose ongoing threat to US after Khamenei killing, US intel warns

Department of Homeland Security assessment says a large-scale physical attack is unlikely, but warns Tehran and allies will escalate retaliatory actions as air campaign widens

By [Reuters](#) 3 March 2026, 3:47 pm



A protester sets fire to an image depicting a mugshot of US President Donald Trump and reading "Wanted Donald Trump is wanted by all Shia Muslims in the world" during a protest against the US-Israel attack of Iran and the killing of the supreme leader, in front of Israeli Consulate in Istanbul, on March 1, 2026. (Ozan KOSE / AFP)

Iran and its proxies could target the US with attacks in response to the Saturday killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei by Israeli and US strikes, according to a US intelligence assessment reviewed by Reuters. The February 28 threat assessment produced by the Office of Intelligence and Analysis at the Department of Homeland Security said Iran and its proxies "probably"

pose a threat of targeted attacks on the United States, although a large-scale physical attack was unlikely.

The report added that, in the short term, the main concern was that Iran-aligned "hacktivists" would conduct low-level cyberattacks against US networks, such as website defacements and distributed denial-of-service attacks.

"Although a large-scale physical attack is unlikely, Iran and its proxies probably pose a persistent threat of targeted attacks in the Homeland, and will almost certainly escalate retaliatory actions — or calls to action," the DHS report reviewed by Reuters said.

In response to a request for comment, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said in a statement: "I am in direct coordination with our federal intelligence and law enforcement partners as we continue to closely monitor and thwart any potential threats to the homeland."

Iran on Sunday confirmed reports of Khamenei's death in a strike on Saturday that was initially announced by Israel and US President Donald Trump.



Workers install a billboard on an overpass containing a portrait of the late Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in Tehran, Iran, Monday, March 2, 2026. (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

The DHS assessment also said Iran would probably continue its attacks against US and allied targets in the Middle East and would almost certainly blame senior US government officials for any protests that begin because of Trump's statement calling for regime change.

The US and Israeli air war against Iran, launched on Saturday, widened on Monday as the Iran-backed Hezbollah terror group fired missiles at Israel and Israel attacked Hezbollah sites in Lebanon in

response, and Tehran kept up its missile and drone attacks on Gulf states that host US military bases.

On Monday, authorities investigating [the previous day's shooting](#) at a bar in Austin, Texas, that killed at least two people said it was too early to say whether the gunman was motivated by the war in Iran.

The body of the gunman, who was killed by police, was seen in a photo obtained by Reuters wearing a shirt with an Iranian flag and "IRAN" spelled out in green, white, and red across the front. He was also wearing a sweatshirt that said "Property of Allah" on it, a US law enforcement official told Reuters.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-and-its-proxies-pose-ongoing-threat-to-us-after-khamenei-killing-dhs-warns/>

The Ages of Purim



Daniel Greenfield

Tonight the celebration of the holiday of Purim begins. Purim is a Jewish holiday often neglected outside the more religious communities in America and Israel because it commemorates an



attempt to exterminate the Jews.

If Purim had concluded with a lesson on tolerance, liberal Jews might be more inclined to celebrate it. Unfortunately it ends with a genocidal madman being hung from a tree and the Jews fighting for their lives, winning and slaughtering their enemies.

And instead of feeling guilty about it, their descendants eat pastries, dress up in costumes and get drunk. At least those of their descendants who believe in survival instead of surrender.

Leftist Jews complain about the difference of values they have with Israeli Jews who insist on survival instead of surrender. They have an even bigger difference of values with the Jews of the Bible. And with Jews throughout history.

Not to mention with the religion of the Jewish people.

The more liberal a Jew is, the less likely he is to celebrate the substance of his people's holidays as they conflict with his worldview and virtues. Moshe, the Maccabees and Mordechai don't seem like role models, not even if you rebrand them as community organizers and claim that they were fighting prejudice.

That's why Jewish leftists have made Vashti, the wicked queen who oppressed the Jews and forced them to violate the Sabbath, into their heroine in Esther's place.

There is something relentlessly bloody-minded about those Jews of the Bible. They care very little about a sustainable environment or LGBT rights, and instead walk through the corpses of their enemies with no regrets or apologetic wincing. They stand up for their own people in a regrettable show of tribalism that perpetuates the cycle of violence instead of preaching about Tikkun Olam.

The story of the Megillah, the Scroll of Esther, is the story of how Mordechai, the descendant of the first Jewish king of Israel, snubbed the Grand Vizier of a multicultural empire by refusing to bow to him. The obstinate Benjaminite so infuriated the Vizier that he plotted to kill all the Jews. The smart thing to do would have been to bow to Haman. To invite him to the ADL and let him give a pre-written speech and then give him a standing ovation.

Jewish leaders no doubt hurried to reassure Haman that this fanatic was in no way representative of their values of tolerance and appeasement. Hadn't they attended the feast where the sacred vessels of their own people were used to serve wine and spirits to the mob? Rather than anticipating the return to their land at the end of the prophesied 70 year period of exile, they had cheered the brutish tyrant and made Sushan, his capital, into their new holy city.

A few tens of thousands had gone back to Israel, which the empire had repopulated with other peoples. There they struggled to survive, building half the day and keeping watch with their spears from the time the stars came out until the sun rose. Most Jews however had remained behind in the Persian Empire. The struggling settlements of the Jews under the last of the prophets seemed like a futile proposition. The future belonged to empires, to Babylon, Persia and Rome.

There was no room anymore for the sort of pride displayed by Mordechai. This was Haman's hour. Israel was gone and would never return. Rebuilding the Temple was a fool's dream. Why go off to some place your ancestors had come from, to slave in the hot sun, to choke on dust and sleep with a spear by your side expecting an attack from the nomads that had settled in the land?

In Sushan, the wine is plentiful, the bazaars are never closed and the empire will never fall. There is no room for ancient dreams in the new empire. No room for old fables about slavery and freedom. Perhaps in ancient times some deity had liberated them from Egypt, but here in the modern present, it was the fall of the Babylonian Empire which had raised them up out of slavery and given them a place among the subject peoples of a new empire. They bowed to Haman and to the new order. They gave up their dreams and their religion and drank headily of the wine at the festival of the king. On their couches, they dreamed they saw a new world opening before them.

Mordechai knew that all this would pass away. He had seen through the illusion that every age brings with it the end of history, a new age whose achievements break with the past and usher in a boundless future. The shadow crosses the sundial, the walls come crashing down and the new era of history ends up buried under the rubble of time.

The confrontation between Mordechai and Haman was a collision between two different conceptions of history. It was a contest for the Jewish soul.

Mordechai defied Haman to remind the Jews, who had abandoned religion and nation for the new age of the Persian Empire, of the ugly and bloody truths under the hollow glories of that new age.

In every age, the Jewish soul is nearly lost and then redeemed. The people seem on the verge of vanishing, but then survive. Mordechai understood that the future of the Jews did not depend on the Persian Empire. It

depended on their willingness to remember who they were. And so he defied Haman and brought on a Holocaust. And at the end of it, the Jews fought for their survival.

Purim, a holiday preceded by a fast kept by the men going into battle and their loved ones, is not about forgiving your enemies, progressive taxation or coming out of the closet. It is about survival. Not mere survival, but the skin of the teeth sense of how close we came, that moment of revelation which pulls back the curtains of the material world and reminds us of the impossibility of our survival under all the ordinary rules of the world that new ages are found on. It reminds us that behind the scenes of the brick and mortar, steel and steam world, is something else entirely. A force that breaks apart the towers of history, that saves us when we should have died, that has entrusted us with a mission. It reminds us of what the world is and reminds us of Itself and of what we are.

When you stand on the edge of death, life is a revelation. It is not our deaths under the Egyptian sun, the blades and bullets of a thousand empires and kingdoms, or the ovens of Dachau that we are obsessed with. It is that moment of survival. The revelation that even amid the horrors of all that we have witnessed and the terrible things that we had to do to survive, we have risen out of the ground, watched the flesh cover our bones and stood alive again upon the earth. Every time we survive, we are reminded of the fragility of the world and of our enemies who wielding every power and trick, have failed to destroy us. Each time we rise, we transcend the world, in confronting our dead, we confront our immortality.

It is not a purely joyous experience. The day of Purim is preceded by a day of fasting. Before the celebration comes a day of battle as the struggle to survive, the long decline into the abyss, the final desperate hours, suddenly give way to the upheaval of an impossible salvation. We remember the pain, the sense of the grave closing over us, the bodies lying everywhere, the certainty that we will be next. We accept the hopelessness of our situation and then we walk out of the grave and praising G-d, sit down to the feast.

This is Jewish history. It is an alien one to the New Age Jew who clings tightly to the new era and its rules, to its pieties and its mores, who scowls at the old ones for refusing to come and join the imperial festivities where the vessels of the temple are used to serve drinks and the mob toasts that the 70 years have come and gone, and still there is no chance of the Jews returning to their Jerusalem and reclaiming the lost history. "The past is the past," says the New Age Jew. "The past is the present is the future," says the Jew.

The feast of the New Age is the celebration of the end of history, a golden time when there is an unlimited bounty for all, where the wine and the free health care will never run out, where everyone will live together under one government in perfect brotherhood for all time. Many Jews are drawn to this feast, its golden vessels, its vast bounty and its glorious ideals. But then enters the Grand Vizier and some of them begin to frown for though he wears rich garments and speaks soothing words, he is a monster. They don't always know how they know it, but it is a nagging feeling that creeps into them that there is something rotten at the heart of this new age.

Most of them still bow to him, touching their heads to the floor, some even embrace him and celebrate his vision. They assure others that he is our friend, the only man who can realize the promise of this age, a wise and noble leader whose vision of change brings new hope. But one or two stay away from the feast and refuse to bow to him. Instead they look to Jerusalem, to where the battle between good and evil was once fought, and where it will be fought again. They know him for what he is.

The Grand Vizier knows that he must destroy them, must destroy them all, because they have seen through what he is, and they have seen through the shallow trappings of the golden age of fools. They know that there is more to the world than the might of men and the cornucopias of kings. They know that he is not all-powerful and when he looks at them, a scowl wrinkles his face, because he knows it too.

So he casts a lot, random chance in a random world where chance is supreme and the whim of every ruler outweighs the weight of history. The bills are signed, the laws are passed, the decrees go out, the officers from the vast imperial bureaucracy are assigned to inform every citizen that their new age will be inaugurated with blood. A people who are not a proper part of the multicultural empire of laws must be wiped out in a properly democratic fashion. Crowd-sourced genocide.

And then the Grand Vizier ends up dangling from a rope, the tanks break through to Berlin, the chariots fall into the sea, the mustachioed dictator dies in a bedroom in Moscow his clothes soaked in his own urine-- and everything has gone completely wrong.

It's an old story and a new story. We tell it over and over again because it is always happening. It is our story and the story of the world. It is the story we have accepted from our parents and it is the story that we will pass on to our children. It is the story of the blood sacrifice of the New Age that goes wrong. The sacrifice survives, bloodied and scarred, the New Age goes down to ruin.

Purim exists because Queen Esther asked the Jews of Israel to write of her for generations. The Persian Empire she had become a part of, the sacrifice she made by leaving the physical stream of Jewish history to be repaid by becoming a vital part of its spiritual history, would fall. Not in her time, but it would. The memory would be carried on by the Jews. Purim is that memory.

Jewish holidays celebrate the interconnection of Jewish survival and productivity with G-d. The Second Commonwealth fell. Israel may fall. A thousand years from now, the world may little resemble anything we can imagine. And yet, somewhere, Jewish children will celebrate Purim as they have for thousands of years.

They may even celebrate other holidays, still unimagined, other memories of salvation from horrors yet to come and remembrances of tragedies yet to be experienced. And if we look through history, as Mordechai did through Haman and the Persian Empire, we may be able to see them on the other side, the descendants of those who survived the whips of Egypt, the slave markets of Babylon, the armies of Rome, the sword and the flame, the concentration camp and the suicide bomber, celebrating a million holidays yet to come.

<https://www.danielgreenfield.org/2026/03/the-ages-of-purim.html>



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 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