



# Iran Summary

## March 2025

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**Executive Summary:** On March 15, President Donald Trump [authorized](#) an air campaign in Yemen following Houthi aggression in the Red Sea, and U.S. forces continue to carry out daily strikes. Accusing the Houthis of acting on behalf of Iran as they continue to target vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, one of the world's most vital maritime waterways, Trump took to social media and [threatened](#) action against Tehran. His threats against Iran follow a month-long back and forth with Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei regarding nuclear deal negotiations. Through interviews, social media posts, and even [letters](#) addressed to Khamenei himself, Trump repeatedly offered Iran a choice to relinquish its nuclear program either diplomatically or militarily. Despite Trump's efforts, Khamenei and other Iranian representatives have [rejected](#) direct negotiations with the United States under the threat of military pressure. Israel [resumed](#) military operations in the Gaza Strip after U.S.- Hamas ceasefire negotiations collapsed. Israel [carried out](#) widespread strikes in southern Lebanon after Hezbollah fired several rockets in violation of the ceasefire that had been in effect since November 2024. Iran's currency, the rial, [fell](#) to a historic low against the U.S. dollar. According to the Oslo-based Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO), as of March 31, the Islamic Republic had [executed](#) 229 people in 2025.

## Nuclear:

- On March 30, the Associated Press [reported](#) that Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, had responded to President Trump's letter via a source in Oman, rejecting direct nuclear talks with the United States.
  - » Soon after the announcement, President Trump [threatened](#) to bomb Iran, as well as enforce secondary tariffs, if the Islamic Republic refused to negotiate a nuclear deal with the United States.
  - » Following Trump's warning, Khamenei [promised](#) severe consequences for the United States were Trump to authorize an attack on Iran.
- On March 24, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi [rejected](#) direct nuclear negotiations with the United States but claimed that "the way is open for indirect negotiation ... until there is a change in the other side's approach towards the Islamic Republic."
- On March 21, Khamenei [announced](#) during a televised speech that "The Americans should know threats will get them nowhere when confronting Iran."

- » Khamenei further claimed that the United States “and others should know that if they do anything malign to the Iranian nation, they will get a hard slap.”
- On March 18, according to a White House press release, in a phone conversation, President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin [spoke](#) about the “need to stop proliferation of strategic weapons” and “shared the view that Iran should never be in a position to destroy Israel.”
  - » Their call followed the March 4 report from *Bloomberg News* that Putin had allegedly [agreed](#) to mediate nuclear talks between the United States and Iran.
- On March 17, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi [met](#) International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Chief Rafael Grossi in Austria to discuss Iran’s nuclear program. Their meeting followed Grossi’s warning that “Iran has an extremely ambitious and extensive nuclear program, under which it is enriching uranium to nearly weapons-grade levels.”
- On March 13, Iranian Foreign Minister Araghchi [said](#) Iran would only consider a nuclear deal with the United States if the country ceases its “pressure and threats” against the Islamic Republic.
  - » On the same day, when asked about Iran possibly holding indirect nuclear talks with the United States via a third party such as Oman, Araghchi [claimed](#) that “indirect negotiation is feasible ... What is important is that the will to negotiate and reach a fair and just agreement comes up in equal conditions, and the form of it does not matter.”
- On March 12, Iran [received](#) President Trump’s letter after it was delivered by a senior adviser to the President of the United Arab Emirates.
- On March 7, President Trump [announced](#) in an interview with *Fox Business* that he had addressed a letter to Khamenei proposing a nuclear deal with Iran.
  - » In the letter, Trump reportedly gave Iran a two-month deadline to negotiate a nuclear deal. Trump [claimed](#) he wrote to the Ayatollah, “I hope you’re going to negotiate because if we have to go in militarily, it’s going to be a terrible thing.”
  - » On March 11, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian [said](#), “It is unacceptable for us that they [the US] give orders and make threats. I won’t even negotiate with you. Do whatever the hell you want.”
  - » On March 9, Iran’s mission to the U.N. [posted](#) on social media, asserting, “If the objective of negotiations is to address concerns vis-à-vis any potential militarization of Iran’s nuclear program, such discussions may be subject to consideration.”
  - » On March 8, Khamenei [responded](#) to reports of negotiations with the United States, asserting, “The insistence of certain bullying governments on negotiations isn’t aimed at resolving issues.”
  - » On March 7, Iranian Foreign Minister Araghchi [addressed](#) nuclear talks with the United States, stating, “We will not enter any direct negotiations with the U.S. so long as they continue their maximum pressure policy and their threats.”
- On March 6, the Trump administration [disclosed](#) a potential plan that would reduce Iran’s ability to obtain a nuclear weapon.

- » His plan, which is a part of his broader maximum pressure campaign, includes recruiting allied nations to halt and inspect Iranian oil tankers traveling through the Strait of Malacca and other maritime chokeholds.
- On March 3, the IAEA [reported](#) that Iran possesses enough 60 percent enriched uranium to build six nuclear weapons.
- On March 2, President Pezeshkian [addressed](#) Iran’s Parliament, commenting on a potential nuclear deal with the United States. In his speech, he hinted he disagreed with Khamenei regarding negotiations with the United States.
  - » Pezeshkian said, “I believed that it would be better to engage in dialogue, but the Leader of the Revolution stated that we will not negotiate with the United States, and I also declared that we will not negotiate with the United States.”
  - » According to an *Iran International* [report](#), Pezeshkian’s speech “marks the first time an Iranian president, while still in office, has openly acknowledged a significant policy disagreement with Khamenei on a matter of dire national importance.”

## Iran-backed Proxy Aggression:

- The Houthis [fired](#) 11 ballistic missiles at Israel over the course of the month, following the breakdown of U.S.- Hamas ceasefire negotiations.
  - » According to *Jewish News Syndicate*, three of the missiles did not [activate](#) Israeli warning systems. At least eight of the missiles were [intercepted](#), and none of the attacks caused significant damage.
- On March 25, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) [released](#) footage of what Iranian media is currently referring to as “a new missile city.” The facility is underground, but its location remains unknown to the public.
  - » According to reports, many Iranians believe that the proclaimed “new” facility is actually an older facility that the military has repurposed for a propaganda campaign.
- On March 22, Hezbollah [fired](#) at least five rockets at northern Israel, [violating](#) the terms of the ceasefire agreement that had been in effect since late November of 2024.
  - » According to the Israeli Air Force (IAF), three of the rockets were [intercepted](#), and two did not cross the border.
  - » Israel [carried out](#) widespread strikes in southern Lebanon in response to the attack.
  - » Hezbollah [denies](#) responsibility for the rocket attack.
- On March 17, Israel [resumed](#) military operations in the Gaza Strip after U.S.- Hamas ceasefire negotiations collapsed.
  - » U.S. Middle East special envoy Steve Witkoff [blamed](#) Hamas’s “entirely impractical” demands for the collapse.
  - » Following the breakdown of the ceasefire, Israel [carried out](#) widespread strikes against Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip.

- » Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#), “From now on, Israel will act against Hamas with increasing force. And from now on, negotiations will only take place under fire. Hamas has already felt the blow of our arm in the last 24 hours. And I want to assure you: This is just the beginning.”
- On March 17, President Trump [posted](#) on Truth Social blaming Iran for carrying out attacks via its Houthi proxies.
  - » He stated, “Any further attack or retaliation by the Houthis will be met with great force, and there is no guarantee that that force will stop there ... Every shot fired by the Houthis will be looked upon, from this point forward, as being a shot fired from the weapons and leadership of IRAN, and IRAN will be held responsible, and suffer the consequences, and those consequences will be dire!”
- On March 16, the Houthis [launched](#) at least 11 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and one ballistic missile at ships in the USS *Harry S. Truman* aircraft carrier group as it transited the Red Sea.
  - » All 11 UAVs were shot down by U.S. forces, and the ballistic missile fell short.
- On March 16, U.S. National Security Advisor Mike Waltz [commented](#) on the recent Houthi threats, affirming, “All options are always on the table with the president, but Iran needs to hear [President Trump] loud and clear.”
- On March 15, at the request of President Trump, U.S. CENTCOM [began](#) a campaign of widespread airstrikes against the Houthis in Yemen, targeting over 30 of the terrorist group’s strongholds in the region.
  - » After the American strikes in Yemen, Major General Hossein Salami, Commander of the IRGC, [warned](#) the United States, “we warn our enemies that Iran will respond decisively and destructively if they carry out their threats.”
  - » The United States continues to [carry out](#) daily strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen.
- On March 4, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio [redesignated](#) the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.
  - » In his statement, Rubio wrote, “As President Trump laid out in Executive Order 14175, “the Houthis’ activities threaten the security of American civilians and personnel in the Middle East, the safety of our closest regional partners, and the stability of global maritime trade.”

## Russia/China Ties:

- On March 14, the Iranian, Chinese, and Russian deputy foreign ministers [convened](#) in Beijing to discuss sanctions on Iran and the Iranian nuclear program.
  - » China’s vice foreign minister, Ma Zhaoxu, announced that the three countries “emphasized the necessity of terminating all unlawful unilateral sanctions.” Furthermore, he claimed that “the three countries reiterated that political and diplomatic engagement and dialogue based on the principle of mutual respect remains the only viable and practical option in this regard.”

- On March 10, Russian and Chinese ships [arrived](#) at Iran’s Chabahar port in the Gulf of Oman for the joint Security Belt–2025 military exercise.
  - » According to *CNN*, the exercise [included](#) “the Type 052D guided-missile destroyer *Baotou* and supply ship *Gaoyouhu*” from China, “the *Rezky* and *Russian Hero Aldar Tsydenzhapov* corvettes, and the *Pechenega* tanker of the Pacific Fleet” from Russia, and “a stealth missile corvette and a patrol ship” from Iran.
- On March 4, an Iranian defense ministry official [revealed](#) to *Reuters* that seven Russian weapons specialists traveled to various missile production sites throughout Iran in 2024. While *Reuters* could not confirm the purpose of the visits, six of the seven Russian weapons specialists’ passports contained notations indicating that they were in Iran on “official state business.”

## Domestic/Human Rights:

- According to the Oslo-based Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO), as of March 31, the Islamic Republic had [executed](#) 229 people in 2025.
  - » As Iranians welcomed the new year on March 20, the National Council of Resistance of Iran, an Iranian political organization based in Europe, [reported](#) that during the Persian year 1403, the Iranian regime executed 1,153 people.
  - » On March 13, the U.N.’s Special Rapporteur Mai Sato [revealed](#) that “Iran remains the highest per capita user of the death penalty globally.”
- On March 24, the Kurdistan Human Rights Network, a France-based organization, [reported](#) that the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence had arrested 10 Kurdish activists, including civilians and children, and continues to detain them in undisclosed locations.
- On March 18, *Iran International* [reported](#) that the value of the Iranian rial fell to one million per U.S. dollar following Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent’s [statement](#) that Trump’s sanctions on the Islamic Republic will “collapse its already buckling economy.”
- On March 15, President Pezeshkian [declared](#) that Iran’s water crisis is a sign of “God’s wrath.” His comment follows months of depleting water resources.
  - » According to the *Ham-Mihan* newspaper in Iran, the country will have to start [rationing](#) its water supply in the early summer.
- On March 14, the United Nations [reported](#) that the Iranian government had increased “electronic surveillance” through the use of drones and phone apps to spy on women suspected of violating the country’s mandatory hijab laws.
- On March 10, people across Iran took to the streets to [protest](#) government corruption and the ongoing economic crisis, particularly in the housing sector.
- On March 8, a live-streamed video circulating on social media [depicted](#) Iranian security forces violently clashing with four dissidents of the Iranian regime. One dissident committed suicide during the assault in an act of protest.

- On March 3, Mohammad Javad Zarif [resigned](#) as Iran’s vice president after an unnamed official told him to do so. Reportedly, Khamenei supported the decision.
- On March 2, the Iranian government [ousted](#) Finance Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati in a no-confidence vote. The government blamed him for heightened exchange rates and inflation.

## Malign Activities Abroad:

- On March 31, the IRGC [seized](#) two foreign tankers in the Persian Gulf carrying 3 million liters of diesel fuel.
  - » Iran [accused](#) the tankers, identified by state media as the *Star 1* and *Vintage*, of “smuggling” the fuel, and detained the combined 25 crew members aboard the two tankers
- On March 28, the IRGC’s deputy coordinator [called](#) for Iran to prepare for a “major operation” against the United States and Israel. He further stated that “The U.S. and the Zionist regime are at their weakest point in history.”
  - » On the same day, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Qalibaf threatened the U.S. military, announcing, “Their bases and those of their allies will not be safe.”
- On March 23, Israeli police [arrested](#) an Azerbaijani immigrant, now an Israeli citizen living in Netivot, for spying on behalf of the Iranian government. The man surveilled and photographed infrastructure and security sites within Israel.
- On March 23, Iraqi Oil Minister Hayan Abdel-Ghani [revealed](#) that Iranian oil tankers presented forged Iraqi documents while traveling through the Persian Gulf. U.S. Naval forces stopped and detained the ships.
  - » After analyzing shipping records, *Iran International* [reported](#) that Iran is not only forging documents from Iraq but also the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, and Malaysia to bypass U.S. sanctions and export fuel oil and petroleum gas to China.
- On March 20, a jury in New York [found](#) two men guilty of trying to assassinate prominent Iranian dissident and journalist Masih Alinejad on American soil on behalf of the Iranian government in 2022.
- On March 20, Iran [released](#) Olivier Grondeau, a 34-year-old French citizen, after two years of being detained on alleged espionage charges. Iran often detains foreign nationals visiting the country without proper cause or evidence.
- On March 9, former IRGC minister Mohsen Rafiqdoust [admitted](#) during an interview that the Iranian government has collaborated with foreign groups to assassinate dissidents of the regime.
  - » Specifically, he mentioned the assassinations of Iran’s former Prime Minister Shapour Bakhtiar and former military officials Gholam-Ali Oveissi and Shahriar Shafiq. Iran reportedly sought to kill these men due to their allegiance to the former Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

- » Referring to these killings, Rafiqdoust claimed, “The Basque separatist group in Spain carried out these assassinations for us. We paid them, and they conducted the killings on our behalf.”
- On March 5, Iran’s semi-official news agency, *Mehr*, [reported](#) the establishment of the Islamic Resistance in Syria. The terror group formed in response to the Assad regime’s collapse with a mission to “defend Syria from occupation and unite against falsehood.”
- On March 5, the United Kingdom Minister of State for Security Dan Jarvis [revealed](#) that MI5 has foiled over 20 Iranian government-backed plans to kidnap and kill British citizens since 2022.

## Cyber:

- On March 9, *Haaretz* [reported](#) that Iranian hackers had accessed Israeli gun-owners registries, leaking the sensitive databases online.
- On March 6, Israel’s medical sector [suffered](#) a possible Iranian cyber-attack. The attack targeted Bikur Rofeh, a network storing military members’ medical records.
  - » At the time of the attack, Bikur Rofeh’s cybersecurity could not confirm any damage to their servers.
- On March 4, *The Hacker News* [announced](#) that Iranian hackers launched a phishing campaign on aviation and satellite organizations in the United Arab Emirates by using a compromised email account belonging to an India-based electronics company.
- On March 3, an alleged Iranian botnet [launched](#) a major Denial of Service (DDoS) attack across multiple sectors, including telecom providers and gaming platforms. The botnet, officially known as Eleven11bot, has already [compromised](#) more than 86,000 Internet of Things (IoT) devices.

## Recent JINSA Publications on Iran:

- **March 26:** “[Stopping Iran’s Nuclear Program Requires U.S.-Israel Unity](#),” *The National Interest*, Michael Makovsky, PhD and Lt Gen David Deptula, USAF (ret.)
- **March 20:** “[Iran Nuclear Tracker: February 2025 Quarterly Update](#),” Jonathan Ruhe and Yoni Tobin
- **March 18:** “[Houthi Escalation Projectile Tracker: 3/18/25 Update](#),” Ari Cicurel
- **March 8:** “[The Unraveling of Iran’s Regional Strategy](#),” IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror
- **March 7:** “[Monthly Iran Projectile Tracker: February 2025](#),” Ari Cicurel
- **March 4:** “[U.S. Military Leaders: Support Israel to Prevent Nuclear Iran](#)”