

# Washington's criminal war on Iran rapidly expanding throughout the Middle East and drawing in imperialist powers

Jordan Shilton  
4 March 2026

Hours after would-be dictator Donald Trump announced the launching of the illegal US/Israeli war on Iran in the dead of night early Saturday, the *World Socialist Web Site* noted in its initial response that it was “a massive political crime” and that “the war itself will inevitably escalate and engulf the entire planet.”

Only four days into the conflict, these observations are being confirmed in spades. According to the latest estimates, Washington and its Zionist ally have massacred over 1,000 civilians in Iran, assassinated its head of state and over 50 other leading civilian and military officials, and indiscriminately hit schools, hospitals, and cultural sites of historical significance for humanity as a whole.

Early Wednesday, the barbarism of those directing the US war machine was demonstrated when an American submarine torpedoed an Iranian vessel in the Indian Ocean near Sri Lanka. Some 180 sailors were aboard the ship, which was returning from a training mission in India and posed no immediate threat to anyone. Only 32 have been rescued thus far, making a death toll of close to 150 people likely.

Fascist Secretary of War Pete Hegseth revelled in the bloodbath, gloating to a Wednesday Pentagon press conference that nobody ever said this was going to be a “fair fight.” Referring to the genocidal Zionist regime, which slaughtered over 75,000 Palestinians in Gaza, Hegseth enthused that Israel was fighting the war with “unmatched skill” and that fighting alongside Israel was “a breath of fresh air” for the US.

Speaking earlier in the day, Israel's Defence Minister, Israel Katz, made clear that Washington and Jerusalem's programme of assassinations of Iranian leaders would continue. “Any leader appointed by the Iranian terror regime to continue leading the plan to destroy Israel, threaten the US and the free world and the countries of the region, and oppress the Iranian people, will be an unequivocal target for elimination,” declared Katz.

The war has already developed far beyond the massive US-led onslaught on Iran into what increasingly appears as the beginning of a region-wide conflagration. The genocidal regime in Israel has launched widespread air strikes in

Lebanon, including on the capital Beirut, after Hezbollah fired a handful of rockets into Israel in solidarity with Tehran. Residents living south of the Litani River have been ordered by the Israeli military to evacuate the area. Late Wednesday, the United Nations peacekeeping force in Lebanon reported that Israeli troops had crossed the Blue Line and taken control of several Lebanese villages.

Responding to the unprovoked attack by the US and Israel, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corp has fired missiles and drones at American bases and facilities across the Gulf region. US bases in Bahrain and Qatar have been hit, together with US embassy or consulate buildings in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Speculation has grown that the despotic Gulf states, whose militaries have intercepted dozens of Iranian missiles and drones, could formally enter the war.

The possible expansion of the war to Turkey, a NATO member bordering Iran, came a step closer Wednesday when a missile was shot down by NATO air defences as it approached the Iranian-Turkish border.

The European imperialist powers are also being drawn ever closer into the war. French President Emmanuel Macron announced Tuesday evening the dispatch of the country's only aircraft carrier, the Charles de Gaulle, to the eastern Mediterranean. Rafale fighter jets, air defence systems, and aerial radar units were also deployed to unnamed Middle Eastern countries. Macron revealed that French forces were involved in shooting down drones in the early stages of the war and warned of further action. He stressed that France has defence agreements with Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE, as well as a strategic partnership with Cyprus, where a British airbase was struck by a drone earlier this week.

The aggressiveness of the war of annihilation waged by American imperialism and Israel against Iran makes an expansion of the conflict into a regional bloodbath all the more likely. Through the deployment of barbaric and indiscriminate violence, the two countries believe they can overcome the social and political disasters produced by the series of wars and regime change operations they have fomented throughout the region for decades. US officials, starting with Trump's

announcement of the war's launch, have repeatedly listed Iran's supposed sins going all the way back to the Iranian Revolution of 1979 to justify its savage bombardment of the country of 90 million people. In addition to assisting the US in destroying Iranian society, Israel hopes to exterminate Hezbollah in Lebanon. The Islamist organisation emerged in the 1980s as a mass movement of impoverished Shia Muslims following the bloody convulsions of the country's civil war, which were fuelled by US meddling and Israel's brutal occupation of the country's south.

Along with laying waste to Iran's institutions, cities and infrastructure, the US and Israel are dusting off plans used to devastating effect in Iraq and Syria to incite ethnic and other sectarian divisions across the country. According to a CNN report Wednesday, the CIA has been supplying Iranian Kurdish groups based in northern Iraq with weapons for months to facilitate a Kurdish uprising in western Iran. The article noted,

One person familiar with the discussions said that the idea would be for Kurdish armed forces to take on the Iranian security forces and pin them down to make it easier for unarmed Iranians in the major cities to turn out without getting massacred again as they were during unrest in January.

Another US official said the Kurds could help sow chaos in the region and stretch the Iranian regime's military resources thin.

This operation enjoys backing from Trump himself. CNN reported that he called the Iraqi Kurdish regional Government Sunday to demand that it facilitate the passage of weapons into Iran. Then on Tuesday, Trump had a call with the leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, one of the organisations that signed a recent coalition agreement with four other Iranian Kurdish parties aimed at securing backing from the imperialist powers for a Kurdish state.

The ethnic partition of Iran, a country of 90 million people with numerous minorities, would make Syria look like child's play. The 14-year-long CIA-backed civil war in that country to topple the Iranian-aligned Assad regime claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and turned millions into refugees. The US backed the so-called Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces, before switching to Sunni groups led by the former al-Qaida leader Ahmed al-Sharar. His sectarian authoritarian regime in Damascus has overseen massacres of the Shia minority and driven the Kurds from most of their strongholds since coming to power in December 2024.

In a statement addressing the bankruptcy of the Kurdish nationalists' pro-imperialist orientation, the Sosyalist I?itlik Partisi, the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, wrote of the potential carve-up of Iran,

A Kurdish statelet, landlocked and surrounded by hostile neighbors (Turkey, a rump Iran, and Arab-dominated territories), would be entirely dependent on the patronage of the United States or Israel for its survival—just as the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq has been, serving as an instrument of US policy while its population remains mired in poverty and its politics dominated by corrupt bourgeois-tribal cliques.

An Azerbaijani entity would become a satellite of Turkey or a prize in the competition between Ankara, Moscow and Western oil interests. An Arab entity in Khuzestan—controlling a significant portion of the world's proven oil reserves—would immediately become a zone of imperialist plunder, contested by the Gulf monarchies, the US and global energy corporations. A Baloch entity would become a new front in the great-power struggle over the Indian Ocean, the Strait of Hormuz and the land routes connecting Central Asia to the sea.

The human consequences would be catastrophic. Iran's ethnic groups are not neatly separated into distinct territorial zones. Millions of Azerbaijanis live in Tehran; Kurds, Lurs and Persians are interspersed across western Iran; Arabs and Persians coexist in Khuzestan. Any attempt to draw ethnic borders would produce mass displacement, ethnic cleansing and civil war on a scale dwarfing even the Yugoslav catastrophe.

As far as the financial oligarchy represented by Trump and his gang of fascists is concerned, this bloodbath would be a price worth paying if it enabled them to subordinate the region to colonial status. The plundering of oil and gas, control over trade routes and sidelining of rivals like Russia and China are their goals, irrespective of the cost in human life. Anyone who doubts this should recall the Gaza genocide.

The only social force capable of putting an end to this 21st century imperialist barbarism is the international working class. Workers across the Middle East must be united on the basis of a socialist and internationalist programme with workers in the imperialist centres of North America and Europe to put an end to capitalism, the root cause of imperialist war and plunder.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**