

# Iran death toll surges past 1,200 as Israel bombs two more schools

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The death toll from the US-Israeli war on Iran surged past 1,200 on Thursday as two more schools were bombed in the city of Parand, southwest of Tehran—the third and fourth schools struck since the bombing campaign began six days ago.

Iran’s Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs reported 1,230 people killed and more than 6,000 wounded. The Iranian Red Crescent Society reported that more than 3,600 civilian sites have been damaged, including 3,090 homes, 528 commercial centers, 13 medical facilities and nine Red Crescent centers. The World Health Organization has verified 13 attacks on health infrastructure in Iran, resulting in four healthcare worker deaths and 25 injuries. The Valiasr Burn Hospital in Tehran has been rendered inoperable.

The two schools struck Thursday—the Shahid Bahonar Middle School and the Arian Pouya Elementary School, located across the street from one another—sustained blown-out windows, collapsed classroom walls and heavy structural damage, according to photos verified by the *New York Times*. Iranian authorities had closed schools after declaring a month of mourning for Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, and there were no immediate reports of casualties. But the strikes underscore the pattern of devastation being inflicted on civilian infrastructure across the country.

The schools in Parand are near a telecommunications tower, the type of facility that has been a frequent target throughout the campaign. The *Times* noted that intentional attacks on schools are considered war crimes under international law.

The Parand strikes came less than a week after the deadliest single atrocity of the war: the bombing of the Shajareh Tayyebah girls’ elementary school in Minab, which killed 168 people—most of them girls aged 7 to 12.

BBC Verify’s analysis of satellite imagery and verified video revealed that both the school and the adjacent IRGC

naval compound were hit in what munitions expert N.R. Jenzen Jones described as “multiple simultaneous or near-simultaneous strikes.” Video from the scene shows desperate families rushing through the wreckage, holding up bloodied schoolbags and books. Aerial footage captured three days later showed more than 100 graves freshly dug in rows at a nearby cemetery. Thousands of mourners filled the streets of Minab for the mass funeral, casting rose petals over the procession of coffins, some of them child-sized. Neither the United States nor Israel has accepted responsibility.

According to the US-based Human Rights News Agency, at least 1,114 civilians have been killed since fighting began, among them 183 children.

The devastation of Iranian society is accelerating. Iran’s Foreign Ministry said Thursday that 33 civilian sites have been hit, among them hospitals, schools, residential neighborhoods, the Tehran Grand Bazaar and the Golestan Palace complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Strikes also damaged the Azadi Stadium, the country’s largest sporting venue. Tehran residents reported intensifying bombardment. “Today is worse than yesterday,” one resident told *Al Jazeera* by phone. “They are striking northern Tehran. We have nowhere to go. It is like a war zone.”

Iran remains under a near-total internet blackout for a sixth day—connectivity at 1 percent of normal levels—disrupting hospitals, pharmacies and banks. The economy, already devastated by decades of sanctions and runaway inflation—food prices had risen 105 percent before the war began—is in free fall.

At US Central Command headquarters in Tampa on Thursday, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and Admiral Brad Cooper gave a press briefing in which they outlined the next phase of the war: the systematic destruction of Iran’s capacity to rebuild.

“We’re not just hitting what they have. We’re

destroying their ability to rebuild,” Cooper said, announcing that US forces have struck nearly 200 targets in the last 72 hours, destroyed over 30 Iranian naval vessels, and dropped dozens of 2,000-pound penetrator bombs from B-2 bombers on deeply buried ballistic missile launchers.

Hegseth declared: “Our timeline is ours and ours alone to control.” He boasted there was “no shortage of munitions” and warned that the firepower over Tehran “is about to surge dramatically.”

Trump spoke at the White House the same day, boasting that Iran’s military had been obliterated. “Their navy is gone, 24 ships in three days... Their anti-aircraft weapons are gone, so they have no air force, they have no air defense. All of their airplanes are gone.” He said Iran was calling to make a deal. “I said, ‘You’re being a little bit late,’” Trump said. “We want to fight now more than they do.”

In an interview with *Axios*, Trump declared he must be personally involved in selecting Iran’s next leader, calling the late supreme leader’s son “unacceptable” and insisting “I have to be involved in the appointment, like with Delcy [Rodriguez] in Venezuela.”

Trump is openly seeking the destruction of Iran as a functioning society through the effort to incite an ethno-communal civil war. The CIA is working to arm Kurdish forces inside Iran with the aim of fomenting an uprising, according to CNN.

Trump personally called multiple Kurdish leaders—Masoud Barzani, Bafel Talabani, and Mustafa Hijri—to recruit them into the war effort. Kurdish fighters affiliated with PJAK have deployed inside Iranian territory, and Israeli warplanes have been hitting Iranian security installations along the Iraq border to open a path for a Kurdish ground advance into western Iran. A former Israeli government adviser told *Al Jazeera* that Israel has “no real interest in smooth regime change” and is “more interested in regime and state collapse.”

Trump’s refusal to rule out ground troops—“I don’t have the yips with respect to boots on the ground,” he told the *New York Post*—and his announcement that the Navy will begin escorting tankers through the Strait of Hormuz place American forces within range of Iranian anti-ship missiles in a waterway just 21 miles wide. Six US soldiers have already been killed with 18 seriously wounded.

Israel has seized upon the war to re-invade Lebanon and impose a total siege on Gaza. Israeli troops have crossed into southern Lebanon in a ground incursion, the military has ordered the evacuation of more than 100 villages and

the entire Dahiyeh district of Beirut, and strikes since March 2 have killed at least 77 people and wounded more than 500. In Gaza, Israel shut every border crossing on March 1, halting all food, fuel, medicine and humanitarian aid to more than two million people.

Iran has retaliated with waves of missiles and drones—more than 500 ballistic missiles and 2,000 drones, according to Admiral Cooper—targeting Israel, US military bases and Gulf states. Iranian drones struck Nakhchivan International Airport and landed near a school inside Azerbaijani territory. Eleven civilians have been killed in Israel and at least three in the UAE.

Both houses of Congress voted this week to grant Trump a free hand. The Senate defeated a war powers resolution 47–53 on Tuesday. The House rejected its own measure 212–219 on Wednesday.

The Democratic Party, while quibbling over procedure, parrots the war aims of the administration. At a House Democratic Leaders press conference, Representative Ted Lieu denounced “a murderous, theocratic regime” that “funds terrorist networks and whose stated aim is to destroy the United States and Israel.” Representative Chrissy Houlahan declared: “I don’t mourn those leaders. I am clear-eyed about the threat that Iran is.” Representative Maggie Goodlander called Iran “a brutal and determined enemy... a regime that has blood of our fellow Americans on its hands.” Representative Jared Moskowitz denounced the war powers resolution itself as “the Ayatollah Protection Act.”

The Democrats’ procedural objections are a fig leaf. Not a single faction of the American political establishment opposes the war.



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