

Arab regimes' backing for US-Israel war on Iran preparing region-wide conflagration

Jean Shaoul
31 March 2026

Last week Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) jointly condemned what they called Iran's "blatant" and "criminal" attacks on their energy infrastructure. They declared their right to act in "self-defence" under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter and "to take all necessary measures to safeguard our sovereignty, security, and stability."

The statement signals their impending intervention as active belligerents in a criminal and illegal war against Iran alongside the United States and Israel.

The Arab regimes have from day one focused solely on condemning Iran's retaliatory strikes on their territory, without even mentioning the aggressors, Washington and Jerusalem, by name. The four weeks of bombing have killed thousands of civilians, around 150 children on the very first day of the war, assassinated Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and dozens of senior officials, struck more than 8,000 military, infrastructure and civilian targets and destroyed 130 naval vessels.

Iran had explicitly warned that any state permitting its territory, airspace, or bases to be used in attacks against it would be treated as a "legitimate target." Despite public claims to the contrary, the six Gulf Cooperation Council states—Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman—all allowed the United States and Israel to use their airspace and military installations, just as they had during the US-led war on Iraq in 2003.

While Gulf officials insisted they had pressured Washington not to strike Iran and had refused to authorize the use of their bases, the US-Israeli operation relied on precisely those facilities. This includes Saudi Arabia's Prince Sultan Air Base, which hosted US refuelling planes and offensive actions, while the US has fired ballistic missiles at Iran from Bahrain.

The conclusion is clear: these governments were complicit in an illegal war that has already taken the lives of thousands of Iranian civilians.

That complicity flows inexorably from the dependence, which they describe as "regional security", of all these despotic regimes upon the US and its military power. Before the war, unable to be seen publicly supporting the perpetrator of the Gaza genocide and its principal backer, they wrapped themselves in the language of "de-escalation", "negotiations", "regional security" and "stability". But the moment the confrontation widened, that façade was dropped.

Instead of calling on Trump and Netanyahu to halt their attacks, every Arab state tied its fate to these war criminals and signalled that they wanted the US to finish the job of eliminating Iran as a political and military force in the region.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have led calls for increasing military attacks on Tehran, with the Israeli media consistently framing the Arab condemnation of Iran's retaliatory strikes as evidence of a deeper strategic alignment. Their working hypothesis is that the Gulf monarchies fear Iran, depend on US protection, and therefore share Israel's interest in

containing Iranian power.

The *New York Times* reported that Saudi Arabia's de facto leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, had urged US President Donald Trump to ramp up a war which offered a "historic opportunity" to remake the Middle East. Trump appeared to confirm the report telling journalists, "Yeah, he's a warrior. He's fighting with us." Riyadh has expelled the Iranian military attaché, his deputy and three additional embassy staff, ordering them to leave the country within 24 hours.

Yousef Al Oteiba, the UAE's ambassador to the US, wrote an opinion piece "The UAE Stands Up to Iran", in the *Wall Street Journal*, referring to unconfirmed negotiations between Tehran and Washington and insisting that a "simple ceasefire is not enough".

The Gulf states told the United Nations Human Rights Council that Iranian missile and drone attacks posed an "existential threat", while the Kuwaiti and Emirati representatives accused Iran of seeking to "destabilize" the international order through terror and expansionism. They view ending the war now as little short of a "strategic disaster".

By stability and regional security, they mean US support for an economic and political order that allows their own populations no voice and subordinates the entire region to the requirement of the imperial powers. Far from securing their own regimes, however, they have set in motion a process that is rocking their economies and intensifying working-class opposition to their rule on an international scale.

The military and economic impact of the war

Since the outbreak of the war on February 28, the Gulf states have faced sustained Iranian missile and drone attacks targeting US military bases and critical national infrastructure—energy production and refinery sites, desalination plants, airports, and other economic facilities. At least 27 people have been killed across the region. According to the Saudi outlet *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 83 percent of Iran's missiles and drones have been directed at the Gulf states, with only 17 percent aimed at Israel.

Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz to US-Israeli allied shipping has further disrupted global energy flows, shaken financial markets, and heightened the threat of a worldwide recession.

On Monday an Iranian drone attack hit a fully loaded Kuwaiti crude oil tanker in Dubai port, setting it alight. Dozens of vessels left the area in its aftermath.

Gulf economies are estimated to be losing more than \$2.3 billion per day, while oil exports have plunged by nearly 60 percent—from 25.1 million barrels per day to just 9.7 million. The attacks have undermined the Gulf's position as a global hub for aviation, business, and tourism—key income sources for both citizens and migrant workers.

Saudi Arabia's financial position was already weakening before the

war, prompting cutbacks in megaprojects designed to reduce dependence on oil. Riyadh had hoped to benefit from higher oil prices by exporting crude through its Red Sea pipeline, but this is now threatened by the Yemeni Houthis' entry into the war and the effective closure of the Red Sea to shipping. Vessels are being forced to bypass the Suez Canal and reroute around the Cape of Good Hope.

The smaller Gulf states are even more exposed to the shock.

The collapse of the Gulf economies reverberates far beyond the peninsula, threatening to ignite a new wave of mass unrest across the Arab world—a second “Arab Spring” directed against the authoritarian regimes that dominate the region. As a recent *Al Jazeera* headline noted, “The Arab Spring hasn’t ended, and Arab regimes know it.”

Egypt: the epicentre of regional instability

Nowhere is the destabilising impact of the war more acute than in Egypt, whose repressive regime under Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has survived only through continuous Gulf bailouts.

With 116 million people—twice the population of all six Gulf states combined—Egypt is the political and demographic centre of the Arab world. Its economy is among the region’s most fragile, a reality underscored by Morgan Stanley’s recent downgrade. As the Gulf’s financial lifeline frays, the foundations of Sisi’s rule are beginning to crack.

Suez Canal revenues are again under threat as Gulf oil and gas shipments slow and major shipping companies avoid the Red Sea due to potential Houthi attacks. This strikes at one of Egypt’s few reliable sources of hard currency.

The Cairo stock exchange has suffered sharp losses, and energy shortages are mounting. Israel has cut off gas supplies from its Leviathan and Tamar fields to Egypt and Jordan—exacerbating the energy crisis in both countries, and indirectly in Syria and Lebanon. This is partly a precaution against Iranian retaliation, but also a means of pressuring Cairo to align with US–Israeli policy on Iran and Gaza.

Without imported natural gas to power its already inadequate electricity plants, Egypt has been forced to buy LNG on the spot market. The government has imposed sweeping electricity restrictions: from March 28, all restaurants, shops, cafés, and shopping centres must close by 9 p.m., with workers and small businesses bearing the cost.

Egypt faces an external debt service bill of \$27 billion this year—more than half of all government spending. With only \$53 billion in reserves and bondholders dumping between \$2 and \$6 billion of Egypt’s \$169 billion debt, the pound is under renewed attack. A weaker currency will inflate debt servicing costs, deepen austerity, and accelerate inflation. The working class will be forced to shoulder the burden of repaying international creditors.

Tourism revenues have collapsed due to the war. Remittances from Egyptian workers in the Gulf are uncertain, and Gulf plans to invest tens of billions in Egyptian tourism projects have evaporated.

For Egypt’s workers and rural poor, the consequences are devastating. Poverty has risen steadily since 2020; by 2023, more than 35 percent of Egyptians lived below the national poverty line. Inflation continues to erode wages and savings.

Parallel crises across the Middle East

These dynamics are mirrored across the region.

In Iraq, which is unable to export oil via the Strait of Hormuz, production from its main southern oilfields has fallen from 4.3 million barrels a day to just 1.3 million. The government relies on oil sales for nearly all public spending and more than 90 percent of its income.

Jordan’s government is haemorrhaging an estimated \$3.5 million a day as energy prices soar and natural gas supplies collapse. Israel’s shutdown of its gas platforms—Jordan’s primary source—has choked the country’s energy system, with knock-on effects in Syria where electricity shortages are worsening.

Rising energy costs will deepen an already severe unemployment crisis: joblessness has climbed steadily in recent years, reaching 21 percent in 2025, while youth unemployment has surged past 40 percent. This has forced nearly 10 percent of Jordanians to seek work abroad, mainly in the Gulf. These jobs and remittances look increasingly precarious.

In the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Authority (PA) is at the point of collapse. Israel’s withholding of the tax revenues collected on its behalf has forced the PA to put its staff on short hours and delay wage payments. PA staff now face the loss of their jobs. The unemployment rate is already 40 percent.

The greatest danger facing the Arab regimes is an eruption of popular opposition. They are all widely despised for their rampant corruption, inequality, and alignment with Washington and Tel Aviv’s wars. Known for sweeping attacks on democratic rights, tight media control, stage-managed elections, and constitutional manipulation, these regimes have intensified repression since the war began.

Protests and rallies are banned. Reports indicate widespread arrests across the Gulf, including of foreign residents, for protesting or even posting videos of Iranian attacks and their aftermath. Some are accused of “glorifying” the strikes.

The way forward

The alignment of the Arab states with Israel and US imperialism marks the terminal political degeneration of the regimes created by the post–World War I imperialist carve-up of the Middle East.

The struggle against the criminal war on Iran and its perpetrators and collaborators demands the independent political mobilisation of the working class to overthrow their own rulers. The lesson to be drawn from recent experiences is unambiguous: imperialism cannot be negotiated with; it must be overthrown.

Workers across the region must be armed with a genuinely socialist, internationalist perspective to oppose the war on Iran, the broader escalation of war against Russia in Ukraine, and advanced plans to target China. To defeat the reactionary US–Israel–Arab alliance, the working class must rally all the oppressed behind it in revolutionary opposition to capitalism—the root cause of war.

In a globalised economy, the path to ending war, genocide, national oppression, and social exploitation lies not along national lines but along international and socialist lines. It requires the working class to take power and establish a United Socialist States of the Middle East, as part of the fight for world socialist revolution.

This begins with a determined effort to unify workers—Arab, Iranian, Jewish, Kurdish and all others—across national, ethnic, and religious divisions. It demands the building of a new revolutionary leadership: the International Committee of the Fourth International.





To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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