

# US-Israel war on Iran is accelerating climate change

Bryan Dyne  
23 April 2026

A new analysis published March 21 by the Climate and Community Institute (CCI) has quantified the greenhouse gas emissions produced in the first 14 days of the US-Israel war on Iran, finding that the conflict released more carbon pollution in two weeks than many smaller nations, such as Iceland, emit in an entire year. The findings begin to expose the full environmental cost of the war, a cost whose largest portion has yet to be emitted and will be borne by the international working class.

The analysis covers the period from February 28 to March 14, 2026, and estimates total emissions of approximately 5.1 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) across five categories: the destruction of homes and civilian buildings, the burning of oil stored in bombed refineries and tankers, fuel consumed in combat and support operations, the embodied carbon of destroyed military equipment, and the embodied carbon in missiles and drones used by all parties.

The largest source was not the weapons or the fighter jets and bombers flying from as far as western England, but the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Based on Red Crescent Society of Iran reports that approximately 20,000 civilian units were damaged or destroyed, including 16,191 residential buildings, 3,384 commercial units, 77 medical centers and 69 schools, the researchers estimated 2.4 million tCO<sub>2</sub>e in embodied emissions that will be released when rubble is cleared and infrastructure rebuilt.

These figures come alongside the thousands of Iranians killed during the genocidal conflict, including more than 170 children murdered during the destruction of an elementary girls' school in Minab.

The second-largest source of emissions was the destruction of oil infrastructure. The US and Israel

struck storage facilities in Tehran, Shahrān and Aghdasieh, while Iranian drone strikes set fires at facilities in Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. Iran also struck at least five oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz. The researchers estimated between 2.5 and 5.9 million barrels of oil were destroyed in these strikes, producing approximately 1.9 million tCO<sub>2</sub>e. Fuel consumed in combat and support operations added another 529,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.

Fuel used during combat was the third largest source of tCO<sub>2</sub>e, producing 529,000 metric tons. This is followed by war materiel that was destroyed and will be replaced, which will produce another 172,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. And the missiles and drones used across the first two weeks of the conflict used produced another 55,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.

Taken together, the first fourteen days produced emissions equivalent to those of the 84 lowest-emitting countries on Earth combined. At the same rate sustained over a year, the total would approach those of a medium-size fossil-fuel economy such as Kuwait.

The war's most significant long-term consequence for climate change, however, will be the restructuring of global fossil fuel production that the conflict has already set in motion.

The researchers write that, historically, every major US-driven energy shock has been followed by a surge in new drilling, new LNG terminal construction and new fossil fuel infrastructure, all of which lock in decades of additional emissions. The war on Iran threatens to replicate and accelerate that pattern on a scale not seen since the Gulf War of 1991.

The opinion piece accompanying the analysis also notes how the Trump administration's doctrine of "energy dominance" is the political framework within which this war was launched. The researchers write

that, “no matter which of the many reasons Trump has since provided for attacking Iran, the US intervention in Iran is now clearly about oil.”

The administration is also responsible for a host of other attacks on Earth’s climate. In February, Trump finalized the rescission of the EPA’s 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding, stripping the agency of its authority to regulate carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases from any source. The administration has also terminated climate satellite programs, gutted the EPA’s workforce and ordered coal plants scheduled for closure to continue operations.

The researchers also note that the reconstruction of Iran and the broader Gulf region will itself produce emissions dwarfing those of the active fighting. A comparable analysis of Gaza and Lebanon found that rebuilding after the war there would produce at least 24 times more emissions than the conflict itself generated. In Ukraine, reconstruction emissions were estimated to roughly equal those of the conflict, a massive 56 million metric tons of CO2 and costing over \$43 billion.

The war in Iran is accelerating an already ongoing ecological disaster. As the WSWS reported March 15, the rate of global warming has nearly doubled over the past decade, rising from 0.2 degrees Celsius per decade in the 1970s to approximately 0.35 degrees per decade today. Current annual emissions of roughly 37 gigatons exceed Earth’s safe operating limit by more than twofold.

Climate scientists estimated as recently as last June that capitalist industrial activity could only release approximately 140 billion metric tons of CO2 to preserve a 50 percent chance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. That budget will be exhausted by 2028 at the latest, a deadline which inches closer every day the war continues.

Trump has declared that the financial costs of the war, already estimated at \$16.5 billion in its first two weeks, will be borne by the working class through cuts to numerous social programs, including the bedrocks of what remains of America’s social safety net, Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

No doubt any remaining investment in climate change will be slashed as well. And even more long-term costs of the fossil fuel infrastructure are being locked in under the banner of “energy security.”

Patrick Bigger, a co-author of the analysis, commented to the *Guardian* that, “This is not a war for security. It’s a war for the political economy of fossil fuels—and the people paying the price are Iranian civilians and working-class communities around the world.”

The war in Iran, like the wars in Ukraine and Gaza before it, makes clear that the climate crisis cannot be separated from capitalism and imperialist militarism. Every global climate summit has floundered on the inability of the capitalist states to subordinate profit to the survival of the Earth’s environment. The US military, one of the largest institutional emitters of greenhouse gases on Earth, and never required to report its emissions to any international body, is now fighting a war that will produce decades of additional fossil fuel dependence.

Effectively addressing the climate crisis is bound up with the broader mobilization of the international working class against the capitalist system and war. Part of this involves the expropriation of the fossil fuel industry, which has masterminded wars and conflicts in the Middle East for more than a century, and the transformation of energy production into a publicly owned and democratically controlled utility as part of the socialist transformation of society.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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