

*This Humanitarian Update is produced by OCHA Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (ROMENA) in collaboration with UN agencies and humanitarian organisations. It covers the period from 28 February to 17 March 2026.*

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Ongoing airstrikes have caused high numbers of civilian casualties, damage and displacement.
- Airstrikes on infrastructure, including a desalination plant and fuel depots, have disrupted some basic services and created serious public health and environmental risks.
- The conflict has hindered livelihoods and businesses, caused stress and trauma among affected communities, and posed challenges to first responders.



Source: OCHA  
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

### KEY FIGURES



**1.2K+**  
People killed<sup>1</sup>



**17K+**  
People injured<sup>2</sup>



**2.5M+**  
People in impact radius<sup>3</sup>



**54K+**  
Civilian units damaged<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Iranian Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME), 11 March 2026.

<sup>2</sup> MoHME, 15 March 2026.

<sup>3</sup> Estimation based on an analysis combining public data on strike locations with population data sets, of people living within a 500m-radius of reported impact zones.

<sup>4</sup> Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), 15 March 2026, including residential, commercial units (often several units in one strike location), education and health facilities.

## SITUATION OVERVIEW

Since 28 February 2026, the human toll of heavy air strikes in Iran, often in densely populated areas, has continued to rise. Casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure have been reported in at least 20 provinces,<sup>5</sup> mostly in Tehran as well as Isfahan, Kermanshah, East Azerbaijan and Alborz provinces.<sup>6</sup> The hostilities have forced millions of people to relocate to safer areas, in addition to causing high levels of stress and trauma. Damage to civilian infrastructure has been extensive, including schools, health facilities, homes, and cultural and commercial sites. Strikes on 7 March 2026 damaged refineries, setting four of them on fire in Tehran alone.<sup>7</sup> The resulting dense smoke over Tehran prompted Government warnings of toxic and acidic rain, while people were initially advised to remain indoors. Essential services have been disrupted in some locations. Loss of water supply to more than 25 villages on Qeshm Island has been reported following a strike on 7 March that damaged its desalination plant. Damage to electricity networks has led to reported power outages in Tehran and other major cities. According to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, airstrikes have also damaged at least 56 cultural heritage sites, including major landmarks in Tehran, such as the Golestan Palace, UNESCO-listed areas in Isfahan, key heritage buildings in Kurdistan and Lorestan provinces, and other sites in Kermanshah, Bushehr, and Ilam.

Masses of civilians have reportedly left the larger affected cities towards safer areas. In the first days of the crisis, population movements have been difficult to monitor. An initial assessment commissioned by the Government and carried out by local organizations estimates that between 600,000 to one million households (amounting to some 3.2 million people) are displaced as of 12 March 2026. The Government has opened public shelters and provided alternative accommodation for people wishing to leave urban areas or whose homes have been destroyed or severely damaged.

Iran hosts 1.65 million refugees and others in need of international protection, mostly Afghans, who are particularly vulnerable, given their already precarious situation and limited support networks. About 24,600 people have returned to Afghanistan since 28 February 2026. Previous large-scale returns to Afghanistan in 2025 were largely attributed to the implementation of the Regularization Policy of Iran following the expiry of the so-called “temporary status of Headcount Slip holders”, impacting an estimated population 2.6 million people.

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<sup>5</sup> IRCS, 10 March 2026.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS), 17 March 2026.

<sup>7</sup> including the refineries of Shahr-e Khatam, Aqdasiyeh, Fardis/Shahid Dolati (Karaj), and Shahr-e Rey in Tehran.

## HUMANITARIAN IMPACT AND NEEDS

Airstrikes across the country have resulted in widespread humanitarian consequences. Civilian populations face mounting needs from increasing risks to security and environmental hazards, besides disruptions to essential services.

### Health

The hostilities have caused mass casualties, with over 1,200 people reported killed by 17 March, including over 200 children and 17 health workers, according to the Iranian Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME). An airstrike at the Minab school on 28 February killed an estimated 165 children. Airstrikes are increasing the demand for search and rescue services, urgent medical care, trauma services and psychosocial support.

According to MoHME, as of 16 March, 241 health facilities and 33 emergency vehicles have been damaged, and six hospitals evacuated. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has verified 18 attacks on healthcare as of 15 March, resulting in eight fatalities. Ongoing air strikes, including on industrial areas, have increased public health risks due to toxic smoke and rain resulting from fuel fires. Concerns have also increased over potential contamination of drinking water and other environmental risks, including chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risks.

### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Strikes reported on water networks and a desalination plant have led to localized disruption of water supplies, while increasing concerns over water contamination. Authorities have confirmed that an attack on 7 March severely damaged the desalination facility and MAPNA Water and Electricity Company infrastructure on Qeshm Island (Hormozgan Province), normally supplying 12,000–15,000 litres of water daily. Authorities have resorted to water trucking for 25 villages directly impacted by the cut in water service. Media outlets also reported a strike on the Golestan spring drinking water facility in Khorramabad on 8 March. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructure is vulnerable to physical disruptions and contamination. Strikes or environmental risks could vastly increase needs among the affected communities. Authorities are prioritizing planning for temporary solutions to access safe water, as well as sanitation and hygiene facilities in case of damage to infrastructure. Water pumping and treatment remain dependent on reliable power supply.

### Shelter and Non-Food Items

In Tehran, more than 18,000 residential and commercial units have reportedly been damaged, and over 29,000 residential units reportedly hit outside of Tehran.<sup>8</sup> Population movements have been observed out of Tehran and other major cities. Authorities report that hundreds of people have been accommodated in public shelters or hotels by municipalities, while many others are staying in alternative accommodation or with relatives. Consolidated numbers are not available, but likely much higher.

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<sup>8</sup> IRCS, 15 March 2026.

The need for temporary alternative accommodation and public shelters is likely to increase as the conflict continues.

## **Protection**

Amid high civilian casualty figures and damage to civilian infrastructure, measures to protect civilians from physical harm are required. These include for example relocations outside at-risk areas, clearance of explosive remnants of war (ERW) and explosive ordnance, risk communication and education, psychosocial support and family tracing.

## **Education**

Over 60 schools have reportedly been damaged or destroyed. Related safety concerns have led to temporary school closures and a shift to online learning until at least the end of March. Offline learning packages are also being planned in case of internet disruptions.

## **Food Security**

Markets remain functional, with food availability reportedly stable as of early March. Government mitigation measures are active but face adequacy constraints, including export bans on food items, expanded electronic subsidies, fuel rationing. Contingency plans for bread supply, and transfer values remain available. Meanwhile, damage to essential infrastructure, fuel reserves, and electricity networks is adding pressure on supply routes, transport, and household coping capacity.

## **Livelihoods**

Conflict and widespread telecommunications disruptions have severely affected Iran's digital commerce market (relied on by an estimated population of 10 million people), and the Shetab interbank network, cutting off income for millions of workers and businesses, including many women-run home enterprises. Further, a strike on 9 March hit a warehouse holding equipment for small solar power plants meant to supply electricity to rural communities.

Construction, agriculture, and the informal sector have been strained by displacement and damage to worksites and productive assets, with the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) reporting over 6,800 commercial units damaged as of 15 March. This adds to already severe economic pressures driven by sanctions, food inflation, currency depreciation and persistently high poverty rates.

## **RESPONSE**

Central, provincial and municipal emergency responders, MoHME and other government entities are leading large-scale response efforts, prioritizing lifesaving and emergency operations, including search and rescue, transport of injured individuals, strengthening of the health system, establishing temporary shelters, distribution of essential supplies, as well as debris removal, and operations supporting urban safety and cleanup.

IRCS, with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), has activated nationwide emergency mechanisms and volunteer networks to support the humanitarian response in 197 affected cities, across 31 provinces. A total of 529 branches have been engaged, with 3,844 response teams deployed. IRCS teams are

conducting search and rescue, technical rescue, first aid, and psychological first aid operations. So far, some 3,500 people have been supported through search operations and 397 through technical rescue. A psychosocial support hotline has been activated with 921 counsellors responding to over 67,000 counselling calls. The IFRC has launched a US\$ 51.5 million emergency appeal to support the IRCS expanded response to increasing humanitarian needs.

Following strikes in industrial areas, Iranian authorities and IRCS have engaged in Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) on health and environmental risks, such as the risk of toxic acidic rains after oil fires.

The United Nations (UN) team in Iran - including resident and non-resident agencies, continues to sustain development, refugee response and humanitarian programming under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). Through the Country Refugee Response Plan (CRRP) and the One UN Impact Fund, the UN and its partners coordinate assistance, uphold essential services, and stand ready to scale up support as crisis-related needs grow. UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) remain fully operational, ensuring the continuity of critical refugee services, basic assistance, child protection, health and food support, as well as early recovery efforts.

## **Health**

Most health facilities remain functional. Temporary primary health care units have been activated, alongside evacuation of affected health facilities, and emergency medical supply and reinforcements. The MoMHE has, however, urged the public to limit non-urgent hospital visits as higher numbers of casualties may stress capacities, stocks and health workers. Continued functionality is contingent on medical and power supplies to facilities as well as protection of health workers and medical teams in line with international humanitarian law obligations. In addition, mental health and psychosocial support for children, adolescents, caregivers and frontline responders is identified as an immediate need. INTERSOS is resuming its support to light rehabilitation of primary healthcare centres, providing medical and non-medical equipment, delivering health-related cash assistance, and supplying assistive devices for people with disabilities in Hormozgan, Kerman, Yazd and Tehran provinces. Essential health, psychosocial support and adolescent wellbeing services continue through the government and NGOs network of partners to the United Nations agency for Children (UNICEF). The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) maintains critical health support to 1.65 million refugees and people in need of international protection. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is supporting backup power systems for health facilities and vaccine cold-chain storage in several provinces.

## **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**

The Tehran Provincial Department of Environment conducted emergency water testing after warnings of toxic acidic rains in Tehran, and provided preliminary advice that water sources are safe, while it continues to monitor the situation. Authorities deployed water tankers to 25 affected villages in Qeshm Island. Teams from Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) are providing WASH and shelter assistance through established service centres and partner networks. UNHCR and partners continue to support access to basic services for refugees affected by disruptions.

## **Shelter, Non-Food Items, and Camp Coordination and Camp Management**

The Government has activated emergency shelters, including preparation of additional schools, sports halls and other suitable facilities. While currently many of the needs are covered by municipalities, private networks and ministries, additional needs could arise in case of larger-scale or protracted displacement.

### **Protection**

Psychosocial support has expanded nationwide through free hotlines, while the “Health Companions of the Nation” campaign has mobilized about 10,000 volunteers to support healthcare and relief teams. IRCS is providing psychological support, with the active hotline (4030) receiving approximately 90,000 calls as of 15 March 2026. Existing hotlines and support systems have been under pressure and requiring additional support. The Government is reported to have relocated thousands of children, including many with disabilities, from special care facilities close to impact sites. UNHCR is maintaining its reception centres and refugee helplines operational, receiving over 1,000 calls daily. Lifesaving protection services continue, including counselling, information provision, psychosocial support and legal assistance, with some delivered remotely to ensure safety. Remote processes for enrolment, case management and resettlement remain functional, with 137 individuals submitted for resettlement since the escalation. NRC provides protection services and legal aid across nine provinces and is preparing to scale up emergency assistance for up to 50,000 Afghan refugees and Iranian nationals.

### **Education**

All schools and universities have been shifted to online modalities until 21 March, and a hotline has been activated to provide families with educational guidance and counselling. The Minister of Education stated that different scenarios have been considered for the continuation of education including using the capacity of Iran’s Television School and preparation of offline educational packages. UNICEF supports continuity of education through government and NGO channels where feasible. NRC delivers education programming through Multi-Purpose Service Centres, adjusting to administrative and financial constraints.

### **Food Security**

Authorities reported no disruptions in stocks and continued availability, noting that 40 flour factories are operating at full capacity and over 500,000 retailers, 4,000 chain stores and 315 municipal markets are distributing essential goods in Tehran province. Provision of food and essential goods to other provinces continues. The gradual removal of subsidies, gradual reduction of purchasing power and increasing challenges in accessing income is expected to increase economic hardship for the affected communities. World Food Programme (WFP) continues to assist around 33,000 refugees with food and cash support across refugee settlements, including daily bread through WFP-supported bakeries and wheat flour distributions supporting home-based baking in smaller locations. With an additional 7,000 Afghan refugees already reported in settlements, WFP’s assistance caseload is expected to increase further. School snacks continue to be distributed as take-home rations by settlement authorities, enabling approximately 9,000 children to benefit from WFP’s school feeding programme even while studying remotely.

## Logistics

Government-led operations include the voluntary mobilization of transport unions in North Sistan and Baluchistan provinces, sending 600 trucks to Chabahar Port to move over 1,200 tons of essential goods across the country. Customs authorities remain operational, while the export of essential goods has been suspended until further notice to address people's needs. Hostilities along the southern coastline, as well as in the Strait of Hormuz, have constrained maritime supply lines. UNDP has supported enhanced IRCS capacity for emergency rescue, debris removal and medical evacuation nationwide. UN agencies maintain operational continuity through remote modalities and coordinated logistics efforts despite administrative and supply-chain constraints.

## Livelihoods and Early Recovery

Humanitarian actors alongside authorities are exploring emergency livelihoods support options for the displaced and most vulnerable people. Rapid assessments of livelihoods disruption are being prepared for deployment in complementarity with government programmes and when conditions allow. Teams from UNHCR remain engaged with communities and authorities on urgent socioeconomic needs, including financial hardship, access to services and livelihoods disruptions. UNDP is working on reinforcing IRCS rescue and debris-clearance operations, supporting volunteer networks, and preparing livelihoods and market assessments to inform early recovery programming.

On the government side, the President announced an emergency resilience package to secure food, medicine and essential goods, support producers, extend banking deadlines and facilitate critical imports, while the Iran Chamber of Commerce has allocated 100 billion tomans to provincial chambers for affected populations.



*Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has mobilized its network of volunteers, with logistics units, medical services, rapid response teams, search and rescue and pharmacies across the country. © Iranian Red Crescent Society.*